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FREDERIC THOMAS BLANCHARD

Q. HORATII FLACCI

EPISTOLAE

AD

PISONES,

ET

AUGUSTUM:

WITH AN ENGLISH

COMMENTARY AND NOTES:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

BY THE

REVEREND MR. HURD.

THE FIFTH EDITION,

CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

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C. HORATII FLACCI

E P I S T O L A R U M

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TO THE REVEREND MR. WARBURTON.

REVEREND SIR,

GIVE me leave to preſent to you the following Eſſay on the *Epiſtle to Auguſtus*; which, whatever other merit it may want, is ſecure of this, that it hath been planned upon the beſt model. For I know not what ſhould hinder me from declaring to you in this public manner, that it was the early pleaſure I received from what you had written of this ſort, which *firſt* engaged me in the province of criticiſm. And, if I have taken upon

me to illuſtrate *another* of the fineſt pieces of antiquity after the *ſame method*, it is becauſe I find myſelf encouraged to do ſo by higher conſiderations, than even the Authority of your example.

CRITICISM, conſidered in its antient and nobleſt office of doing juſtice to the merits of great writers, more eſpecially in works of poetry and invention, demands, to its perfect execution, theſe two qualities: *a philoſophic ſpirit*, capable of penetrating the fundamental reaſons of excellence in every different ſpecies of compoſition; and *a ſtrong imagination*, the parent of what we call *true taſte*, enabling the critic to feel the full force of his author's excellence himſelf, and to impreſs a lively ſenſe of it upon others. Each of theſe abilities is neceſſary. For by means of philoſophy, criticiſm, which were otherwiſe a vague and ſuperficial thing, acquires

acquires the ſoundneſs and ſolidity of ſcience. And from the *power of fancy*, it derives that light and energy and ſpirit, which are wanting to provoke the public emulation and carry the general concluſions of reaſon into practice.

Of theſe talents (to regard them in their ſeparate ſtate) that of a *ſtrong imagination*, as being the commoner of the two, one would naturally ſuppoſe ſhould be the firſt to exert itſelf in the ſervice of criticiſm. And thus it ſeems, in fact, to have happened. For there were very early in Greece a ſort of men, who, under the name of RHAPSODISTS, made it their buſineſs to illuſtrate the beauties of their favourite writers. Though their art, indeed, was very ſimple; for it conſiſted only in *acting* the fineſt paſſages of their works, and in *repeating* them, with a rapturous kind of vehemence, to an

ecſtatic auditory. Whence it appears, that criticiſm, as being yet in its infancy, was wholly turned to *admiration*; a paſſion which true *judgment* as little indulges in the ſchools of *Art*, as ſound philoſophy, in thoſe of *Nature*. Accordingly theſe enraptured declaimers, though they travelled down to the politer ages, could not ſubſiſt in them. The fine ridicule of Plato, in one of his Dialogues [*a*], and the growing taſte for juſt thinking, ſeem perfectly to have diſcredited this folly. And it was preſently ſeen and acknowledged even by the Rhapſodiſt himſelf, that, how *divinely* ſoever he might feel himſelf affected by the magnetic virtue of the muſe, yet, as he could give no intelligible account of its ſubtle operations, he was aſſuredly no *Artiſt*; ΘΕΙΟΝ εἶναι καὶ μὴ ΤΕΧΝΙΚΟΝ ἐπαινέτην.

[*a*] ΙΩΝ.

From

From this time they, who took upon themſelves the office of commenting and recommending the great writers of Greece, diſcharged it in a very different manner. Their reſearches grew ſevere, inquiſitive, and rational. And no wonder; for the perſon, who now took the lead in theſe ſtudies, and ſet the faſhion of them, was a *philoſopher*, and, which was happy for the advancement of this art, the juſteſt philoſopher of antiquity. Hence *ſcientific* or ſpeculative criticiſm attained to perfection, at once; and appeared in all that ſeverity of reaſon and accuracy of method, which Ariſtotle himſelf could beſtow upon it.

But now this might almoſt ſeem as violent an extreme as the other. For though to *underſtand* be better than to *admire*, yet the generality of readers *cannot*, or *will not*, underſtand, where there is *nothing* for them to admire.

So that *reaſon*, for her own ſake, is obliged to borrow ſomething of the dreſs, and to mimic the airs, of *fancy*: And Ariſtotle's *reaſon* was too proud to ſubmit to this management.

Hence, the critical plan, which the Stagyrite had formed with ſuch rigour of ſcience, however it might ſatisfy the curious ſpeculatiſt, wanted to be *relieved* and ſet off to the common eye by the heightenings of eloquence. This, I obſerved, was the eaſier taſk of the two; and yet it was very long before it was *ſucceſsfully* attempted. Amongſt other reaſons of this delay, the principal, as you obſerve, might be the fall of the public freedom of Greece, which ſoon after followed. For then, inſtead of the free and manly efforts of genius, which alone could accompliſh ſuch a reformation, the trifling ſpirit of the times declined into mere verbal amuſements. "Whence, as you ſay, ſo

"great

"great a cloud of ſcholiaſts and gram-
"marians ſo ſoon overſpread the
"learning of Greece, when once that
"famous community had loſt its
"liberty [*b*]."

And what Greece was thus unable, of a long time, to furniſh, we ſhall in vain ſeek in another great community, which ſoon after flouriſhed in all liberal ſtudies. The genius of Rome was bold and elevated enough for this taſk. But Criticiſm of any kind was little cultivated, never profeſſed as an *art*, by this people. The ſpecimens we have of their ability in this way (of which the moſt elegant, beyond diſpute, are the two epiſtles to *Auguſtus* and the *Piſos*) are ſlight occaſional attempts; made in the negligence of common ſenſe, and adapted to the peculiar exigencies of their own taſte and learning: and not by any

[*b*] Pope's Works, vol. v. p. 244. 8vo.

means

means the regular productions of *art*, profeſſedly bending itſelf to this work, and ambitious to give the laſt finiſhing to the critical ſyſtem.

For ſo great an effort as this, we are to look back to the confines of Greece. And there at length, and even from beneath the depreſſion of ſlavery (but with a ſpirit that might have done honour to its age of greateſt liberty), a CRITIC aroſe, ſingularly qualified for ſo generous an undertaking. His profeſſion, which was that of a *rhetorical ſophiſt*, required him to be fully inſtructed in the graces and embelliſhments of eloquence; and theſe, the vigour of his genius enabled him to comprehend in their utmoſt force and beauty. In a word, LONGINUS was the perſon, whom, of all the critics of antiquity, nature ſeems to have formed with the proper talents to give the laſt honour

to his profeſſion, and penetrate the very ſoul of fine writing.

Yet ſo bounded is human *wit*, and with ſuch difficulty is human *art* compleated, that even here the advantage, which had been ſo fortunately gained on the one hand, was, in great meaſure, loſt and forfeited on the other. He had ſoftened indeed the ſeverity of Ariſtotle's plan; but, in doing this, had gone back again too far into the manner of the admiring Rhapſodiſt. In ſhort, with the brighteſt views of nature and true beauty, which the fineſt imagination could afford to the beſt critic, he now wanted, in a good degree, that preciſion, and depth of thought, which had ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed his predeceſſor. For, as Plotinus long ago obſerved of him, *though he had approved himſelf a maſter of polite literature, he was* NO *Philoſopher*; ΦΙΛΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΜΕΝ, ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΣ ΔΕ ΟΥΔΑΜΩΣ.

Thus

Thus the art had been ſhifting reciprocally into two extremes. And in one or other of theſe extremes, it was likely to continue. For the fame and eminent ability of their great founders had made them conſidered as *models*, in their different ways, of perfect criticiſm. Only it was eaſy to foreſee which of them the humour of ſucceeding times would be moſt diſpoſed to emulate. The catching enthuſiaſm and pictureſque fancy of the *one* would be ſure to prevail over the coolneſs and auſterity of the *other*. Accordingly in the laſt and preſent century, when now the diligence of learned men had, by reſtoring the purity, opened an eaſy way to the ſtudy, of the old claſſics, a numberleſs tribe of commentators have attempted, after the manner of Longinus, to *flouriſh* on the excellencies of their compoſition. And ſome of them, indeed, ſucceeded ſo well in this method,

thod, that one is not to wonder it ſoon became the popular and only authorized form of what was reputed *juſt Criticiſm*. Yet, as nothing but ſuperior genius could make it tolerable even in the beſt of theſe, it was to be expected (what experience hath now fully ſhewn), that it would at length, and in ordinary hands, degenerate into the moſt unmeaning, frivolous, and diſguſtful jargon, that ever diſcredited polite letters.

This, Sir, was the ſtate in which you received *modern Criticiſm*: a ſtate, which could only ſhew you, that, of the two models, antiquity had furniſhed to our uſe, we had learned, by an awkward imitation of it, to abuſe the *worſt*. But it did not content your zeal for the ſervice of letters barely to remedy this *abuſe*. It was not enough, in your enlarged view of things, to reſtore either of theſe models to its an-

tient ſplendour. They were both to be revived; or rather a new original plan of criticiſm was to be ſtruck out, which ſhould unite the virtues of each of them. The experiment was made on the TWO greateſt of our own poets; and, by reflecting all the lights of the imagination on the ſevereſt reaſon, every thing was effected, which the warmeſt admirer of antient art could promiſe to himſelf from ſuch an union. But you went farther. By joining to theſe powers a perfect inſight into human nature, and ſo ennobling the exerciſe of *literary*, by the addition of the juſteſt moral, cenſure, you have now, at length, advanced CRITICISM to its full glory.

Not but, conſidering the inveterate foible of mankind, which the poet ſo juſtly ſatirizes in the following work, I mean that, which diſpoſes them to malign and depreciate all the efforts of wit and virtue, —niſi

— niſi quae terris ſemota ſuisque
Temporibus defuncta videt —

Conſidering, I ſay, this temper of mankind, you may ſooner, perhaps, expect the cenſures of the dull and envious of all denominations, than the candid applauſe of the public, even for this ſervice.

I apprehend this conſequence the rather, becauſe criticiſm, though it be *the laſt fruit of literary experience*, is more expoſed to the cavils of ignorance and vanity, than, perhaps, any other ſpecies of learned application: all men being forward to judge, and few men giving themſelves leave to doubt of their being able to judge, of the merits of well-known and popular writers.

Nor is this all: When writers of a certain rank condeſcend to this work of criticiſm, the innovation excites a very

very natural ferment in the *men of the profeſſion.*

Their JEALOUSY is alarmed, as if there was a deſign to ſtrip them of the only honour they can reaſonably pretend to, that of ſitting in judgment on the *inventions* of their betters. But to JUDGE, as well as to INVENT, is thought a violent encroachment in the republic of Letters; not unlike the ambition of the Roman emperors, who would be conſuls, and cenſors too, that is, would have the privilege of excluding from the ſenate, as well as of preſiding in it.

But if jealouſy were out of the caſe, their MALIGNITY would be much inflamed by this intruſion. For who can bear to ſee his own weak endeavours, in any art, diſgraced by a conſummate model?

Beſides, to ſay the truth, the conceptions of ſuch writers, as I before ſpoke

ſpoke of, lie ſo remote from vulgar apprehenſion, that, without either *jealouſy* or *malignity*, DULLNESS itſelf will be ſure to create them many peeviſh detractors. For an ordinary critic can ſcarce help finding fault with what he does not underſtand, or being angry where he has no ideas.

On all theſe accounts, it may poſſibly happen, as I ſaid, that your critical labours will draw upon you much popular reſentment and invective.

But if ſuch ſhould be the *preſent* effect of your endeavours to cultivate and complete this elegant part of literature; you, who know the temper of the learned world, and, by your eminent merits, have ſo oft provoked its injuſtice, will not be diſturbed or ſurprized at it: much leſs ſhould it diſcourage thoſe who

are diſpoſed to do you more right, from celebrating, and, as they find themſelves able, from copying your example;

For USE will father what's begot by SENSE,

as well in this, as in other inſtances.

YOU SEE, Sir, what there is of encomium in the turn of this Letter, was intended not ſo much for your ſake, as my own. Had my purpoſe been any other, I muſt have choſen very ill among the various parts of your character to take *this* for the ſubject of an addreſs to you. For, after all I have ſaid and think of your critical abilities, it might ſeem almoſt as ſtrange in a panegyriſt on Mr. Warburton to tell of his admirable criticiſms on POPE and SHAKESPEARE, as it would be in him, who ſhould deſign an encomium on Socrates, to inſiſt on his excellent ſculp-

ture

ture of MERCURY and the GRACES. Yet there is a time, when it may be allowed to lay a ſtreſs on the amuſements of ſuch men. It is, when an adventurer in either *art* would do an honour to his profeſſion.

I am,

with the trueſt eſteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt obedient

and moſt humble ſervant,

CAMBRIDGE,
March 29, 1753.

R. HURD.

Q. HORATII FLACCI EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM.

CUM tot ſuſtineas et tanta negotia ſolus,
Res Italas armis tuteris, moribus ornes,
Legibus emendes; in publica commoda peccem,
Si longo ſermone morer tua tempora, Caeſar.

COMMENTARY.

EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM.] In conducting this work, which is *an apology for the poets of his own time*, the method of the writer is no other, than that which plain ſenſe, and the ſubject itſelf, required of him. For, as the main diſlike to the Auguſtan poets had ariſen from an *exceſſive reverence* paid to their elder brethren, the *firſt* part of the epiſtle [from line 1 to 118] is very naturally laid out in the ridicule and confutation of ſo abſurd a prejudice. And having, by this preparation, obtained a candid hearing for his defence, he then proceeds [in what follows, to the *end*] to vindicate their real *merits*; ſetting in view the excellencies of the *Latin poetry*, as cultivated by the great modern maſters; and throwing the blame of their ill ſucceſs, and of the contempt in which they had lain, not ſo much on themſelves, or their *profeſſion* (the dignity of *which*, in particular, he inſiſts highly upon, and aſſerts with ſpirit) as on the vicious

Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Caſtore Pollux,
Poſt ingentia fata, Deorum in templa recepti,
Dum terras hominumque colunt genus, aſpera bella
Conponunt, agros adſignant, oppida condunt;
Ploravere ſuis non reſpondere favorem
Speratum meritis. diram qui contudit Hydram,
Notaque fatali portenta labore ſubegit,
Comperit invidiam ſupremo fine domari.

COMMENTARY,

taſte of the age, and certain unfavouring circumſtances, which had accidentally concurred to diſhonour *both*.

This idea of the *general* plan being comprehended, the reader will find it no difficulty to perceive the order and arrangement of *particular* parts, which the natural tranſition of the poet's thought inſenſibly drew along with it.

5—118. ROMULUS, ET LIBER PATER, &c.] The ſubject commences from line 5, where, by a contrivance of great beauty, a pertinent *illuſtration* of the poet's argument becomes an offering of the happieſt *addreſs* to the emperor. Its *double* purpoſe may be ſeen thus. His primary intention was to take off the force of prejudice againſt *modern* poets, ariſing from the ſuperior veneration of the *antients*. To this end the firſt thing wanting was to demonſtrate by ſome ſtriking inſtance, that it was, indeed, nothing but *prejudice*; which he does effectually in taking that inſtance from the *heroic*, that is, the moſt revered, ages. For if ſuch, whoſe acknowledged virtues and eminent ſervices

Urit enim fulgore ſuo, qui prægravat artis
Infra ſe poſitas: extinctus amabitur idem.
Præſenti tibi maturos largimur honores,
Jurandaſque tuum per numen ponimus aras,
Nil oriturum alias, nil ortum tale fatentes.
Sed tuus hoc populus ſapiens et juſtus in uno,
Te noſtris ducibus, te Graiis anteferendo,
Cetera nequaquam ſimili ratione modoque

COMMENTARY.

ſervices had raiſed them to the rank of *heroes*, that is, in the pagan conception of things, to the honours of *divinity*, could not ſecure their fame, in their own times, againſt the malevolence of ſlander, what wonder that the race of *wits*, whoſe obſcurer merit is leſs likely to dazzle the public eye, and yet, by a peculiar fatality, is more apt to awaken its jealouſy, ſhould find themſelves oppreſſed by its rudeſt cenſure? In the *former* caſe, the honours, which equal poſterity paid to excelling worth, declare all *ſuch* cenſure to have been the calumny of malice only. What reaſon then to conclude, it had any other original in the *latter?* This is the poet's *argument.*

But now, of theſe worthies themſelves, whom the juſtice of grateful poſterity had ſnatched out of the hands of detraction, there were ſome, it ſeems, whoſe illuſtrious ſervices the virtue, or vain-glory of the emperor, moſt affected to emulate; and theſe, therefore, the poet, by an ingenious flattery, ſelects for examples to his general *obſervation*,

Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Cæſare Pollux
Poſt ingentia facta, &c.

Aeſtimat; et, niſi quae terris ſemota ſuiſque
Temporibus defuncta videt, faſtidit et odit:
Sic fautor veterum, ut Tabulas peccare vetantis,
Quas bis quinque viri ſanxerunt, Foedera regum
Vel Gabiis vel cum rigidis aequata Sabinis,
Pontificum libros, annoſa volumina Vatum,

COMMENTARY.

Further, as the good fortune of Auguſtus, though adorned with the *ſame* enviable qualities, had exempted *him* from the injuries which had conſtantly befallen *thoſe admired characters*, this peculiar circumſtance in the hiſtory of his prince affords him the happieſt occaſion, flattery could deſire, of paying diſtinguiſhed honours to his glory.

Praeſenti tibi maturos largimur honores.

And this conſtitutes the fine *addreſs and compliment of his application.*

But this juſtice, which Auguſtus had exacted, as it were, by the very authority of his virtue, from his applauding people, was but ill diſcharged in other inſtances.

Sed tuus hoc populus ſapiens et juſtus in uno,
Te noſtris ducibus, te Graiis anteferendo,
Cetera nequaquam ſimili ratione modoque
Aeſtimat, &c.

And thus the very *exception* to the general rule, which forms the encomium, leads him with advantage into his *argument*; which was to obſerve and expoſe "the "malignant influence of prepoſſeſſion, in obſtructing "the proper glories of living merit." So that, as good ſenſe demands in every reaſonable panegyric, the praiſe reſults from the nature and foundation of the

Dictitet Albano Muſas in monte locutas.
Si, quia Graiorum ſunt antiquiſſima quaeque
Scripta vel optima, Romani penſantur eadem
Scriptores trutina; non eſt quod multa loquamur:
Nil intra eſt olea, nil extra eſt in nuce duri:
Venimus ad ſummum fortunae: pinginus, atque

COMMENTARY.

the ſubject-matter, and is not violently and reluctantly dragged into it.

His general charge againſt his countrymen, "of "their bigoted attachment to thoſe, dignified by the "name of *antients*, in prejudice to the juſt deſerts of "the moderns," being thus delivered; and the folly of ſuch conduct, with ſome agreeable exaggeration, expoſed; he ſets himſelf, with a happy mixture of irony and argument, as well becomes the genius and character of the *epiſtle*, to confute the pretences, and overturn the very *foundations*, on which it reſted.

One main ſupport of their folly was taken from an allowed fact, viz. "That the oldeſt *Greek* writers "were inconteſtably ſuperior to the modern ones." From whence they inferred, that it was but according to nature and the courſe of experience, to give the like preference to the oldeſt *Roman* maſters.

His confutation of this ſophiſm conſiſts of two parts. *Firſt*, [from line 28 to 32,] he inſiſts on the *evident* abſurdity of the opinion he is confuting. There was no reaſoning with perſons capable of ſuch *extravagant poſitions*. But, *ſecondly*, the pretended fact itſelf, with regard to the Greek learning, was *groſsly miſunderſtood, or perverſely applied*. For [from line 32 to 34] it was not true, nor could it be admitted, that the

Pſallimus, et luctamur Achivis doctius unctis.
Si meliora dies, ut vina, poemata reddit;
Scire velim, chartis pretium quotus arrogat annus,
Scriptor ab hinc annos centum qui decidit, inter
Perfectos veteresque referri debet, an inter
Vilis atque novos? excludat jurgia finis.
Eſt vetus atque probus centum qui perficit annos.
Quid? qui deperiit minor uno menſe vel anno,

COMMENTARY.

very *oldeſt* of the *Greek* writers were the beſt, but thoſe only, which were old, in compariſon of the mere modern Greeks. The ſo much applauded models of Grecian antiquity were themſelves *modern*, in reſpect of the ſtill *older* and ruder eſſays of their firſt writers. It was long diſcipline and cultivation, the ſame which had given the Greek *artiſts* in the Auguſtan reign a ſuperiority over the Roman, that by degrees eſtabliſhed the good taſte, and fixed the authority, of the Greek *poets*; from which point it was natural, and even neceſſary for ſucceeding, *i. e.* the modern, Greeks to decline. But no conſequence lay from hence to the advantage of the Latin poets, in queſtion; who were wholly unfurniſhed with any previous ſtudy of the arts of verſe; and whoſe works could only be compared with the very *oldeſt*, that is, the rude, foregotten eſſays of the Greek poetry. So that the fine ſenſe, ſo cloſely ſhut up in this conciſe couplet, comes out thus: "The modern Greek maſters of the *fine arts* "are confeſſedly ſuperior to the modern Roman. "The reaſon is, they have practiſed them longer, "and with more diligence. Juſt ſo, the modern "Roman

Inter quos referendus erit? veteresne poetas,
An quos et praesens et posstera respuat aetas?
Ille quidem veteres inter ponetur honeste,
Qui vel mense brevi, vel toto est junior anno.
Utor permisso, caudaeque pilos ut equinae
Paullatim vello; et demo unum, demo et item unum;
Dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi,
Qui redit in fastos, et virtutem aestimat annis.

COMMENTARY.

"Roman writers muſt needs have the advantage of "their *old* ones: who had no knowledge of writing, "as an *art*, or, if they had, took but ſmall care to put "it in practice."

Further, this plea of antiquity is as uncertain in its *application*, as it was deſtitute of all truth and reaſon in its original *foundation*. For if age only muſt bear away the palm, what way is there of determining, which writers are *modern*, and which *ancient*? The impoſſibility of fixing this to the ſatisfaction of an objector, which is purſued [to line 50] with much agreeable raillery, makes it evident, that the circumſtance of antiquity is abſolutely nothing; and that, in *eſtimating the merit* of writers, the real, intrinſic excellence of their writings *themſelves* is alone to be regarded.

Thus far the poet's intent was to combat the *general* prejudice of the critic,

Qui redit in faſtos, et virtutem eſtimat annis.

Taking the fact for granted "of his ſtrong prepoſ-"ſeſſion for antiquity, *as ſuch*" he would diſcredit,

Miraturque nihil, niſi quod Libitina ſacravit.
Ennius et ſapiens, et fortis, et alter Homerus,
Ut critici dicunt, leviter curare videtur
Quo promiſſa cadant, et ſomnia Pythagorea.
Naevius in manibus non eſt, et mentibus haeret
Pene recens? adeo ſanctum eſt vetus omne poema.
Ambigitur quotiens, uter utro ſit prior; aufert
Pacuvius docti famam ſenis, Accius alti:
Dicitur Afranî toga conveniſſe Menandro:
Plautus ad exemplar Siculi properare Epicharmi:

COMMENTARY.

both by raillery and argument, ſo abſurd a conduct. What he gains by this diſpoſition, is to come to the *particulars* of his charge with more advantage. For the popular contempt of modern compoſition, ſheltering itſelf under a ſhew of learned admiration of the *antients*, whoſe age and reputation had made them truly venerable, and whoſe genuine merits, in the main, could not be diſputed, a direct attack upon their fame, at ſetting out, without any ſoftening, had diſguſted the moſt *moderate*; whereas this prefatory appeal to common ſenſe, under the cover of general criticiſm, would even diſpoſe bigotry itſelf to afford the poet a candid hearing. His accuſation then of the public taſte comes in here very pertinently; and is delivered, with addreſs [from line 50 to 63] in a particular detail of the judgments paſſed upon the moſt celebrated of the old Roman poets, by the generality of the modern critics; where, to win upon their prejudices ſtill further by his generoſity and good faith,

he

Vincere Caecilius gravitate, Terentius arte.
Hos ediſcit, et hos arto ſtipata theatro
Spectat Roma potens; habet hos numeratque poetas
Ad noſtrum tempus, Livi Scriptoris ab aevo.
Interdum volgus rectum videt: eſt ubi peccat.
Si veteres ita miratur laudatque poetas,
Ut nihil anteferat, nihil illis comparet; errat:

COMMENTARY.

he ſcruples not to recount ſuch of their determinations on the merit of ancient writers, as were reaſonable and well founded, as well as others, that he deemed leſs juſt, and as ſuch intended more immediately to expoſe.

We ſee then with what art the poet conducts himſelf in this attack on the *antients*, and how it ſerved his purpoſe, by turns, to ſoften and aggravate the *charge*. *Firſt*, "he wanted to lower the reputation "of the old poets." This was not to be done by general invective, or an affected diſſimulation of their juſt praiſe. He admits then [from line 63 to 66] their reaſonable pretenſions to *admiration*. It is the *degree* of it alone, to which he objects.

Si veteres ITA *miratur laudatque*, &c.

Secondly, "he wanted to draw off their applauſes from "the ancient to the modern poets." This required the *advantages* of thoſe moderns to be diſtinctly ſhewn, or, which comes to the ſame, the *comparative deficiencies* of the antients to be pointed out. Theſe were not to be diſſembled, and are, as he openly

infiſts

Si quaedam nimis antique, ſi pleraque dure
Dicere cedit eos, ignave multa fatetur;
Et ſapit, et mecum facit, et Jove judicat aequo.
Non equidem inſector, delendave carmina Laevî
Eſſe reor, memini quae plagoſum mihi parvo
Orbilium dictare; ſed emendata videri
Pulchraque, et exactis minimum diſtantia, miror:
Inter quae verbum emicuit ſi forte decorum,
Si verſus paulo concinnior unus et alter;

COMMENTARY.

inſiſts [to line 69] *obſolete language, rude and barbarous conſtruction*, and *ſlovenly compoſition*,

Si quaedam nimis ANTIQUE, *ſi pleraque* DURE,
Dicere cedit eos, IGNAVE *multa.*

But what then? an objector replies, theſe were venial faults, ſurely; the *deficiencies* of the times, and not of the men; who, with ſuch incorrectneſſes as are here noted, might ſtill poſſeſs the greateſt *talents*, and produce the nobleſt *deſigns*. This [from line 69 to 79] is readily admitted. But, in the mean time, one thing was clear, that they were not *finiſhed models* — *exactis minimum diſtantia*. Which was the main point in diſpute. For the bigot's abſurdity lay in this,

Non veniam antiquis, ſed honorem et praemia poſci.

Nay, his folly is ſhewn to have gone ſtill greater lengths. Theſe boaſted models of antiquity, with all their imperfections, had occaſionally, [line 73, 74] though the inſtances were indeed rare and thinly ſcattered, *ſtriking beauties*. Theſe, under the recommendation of *age*, which, of courſe, commands our reve-

Injuſte totum ducit venitque poema.
Indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia craſſe
Compoſitum, illepideve putetur, ſed quia nuper:
Nec veniam antiquis, ſed honorem et praemia poſci.
Recte necne crocum floreſque perambulet Attae
Fabula, ſi dubitem; clament periiſſe pudorem
Cuncti pene patres: ea cum reprehendere coner,
Quae gravis Aeſopus, quae doctus Roſcius egit.

COMMENTARY.

reverence, might well impoſe on the judgments of the *generality*, and, ſtanding forth with advantage, as from a ſhaded and dark *ground*, would naturally catch the eye and admiration of the more *learned*. Thus much the poet candidly inſinuates in excuſe of the bigot's *ill judgment*. But, unluckily, he had cut himſelf off from the benefit of this plea, by avowedly grounding his *admiration*, not merely on the intrinſic excellence, ſo far as it went, of the ancient poetry itſelf; but on the advantage of any extraneous circumſtance, which but caſually ſtuck to it. The accident of a play's having paſſed through the mouth, and been graced by the action of a juſt ſpeaker, was ſufficient [from line 79 to 83] (ſo inexcuſable were his prejudices) to attract his wonder, and juſtify his eſteem. In ſo much that it became an inſolence, generally cried out upon, for any one to cenſure ſuch pieces of the theatre,

Quae gravis Æſopus, quae doctus Roſcius egit.

This being the caſe, it was no longer a doubt, whether the affected admiration of antiquity proceeded from

Vel quia nil rectum, niſi quod placuit ſibi, ducunt;
Vel quia turpe putant parere minoribus, et, quae
Inberbi didicere, ſenes perdenda fateri.
Jam Saliare Numae carmen qui laudat, et illud
Quod mecum ignorat, ſolus volt ſcire videri;

COMMENTARY.

from a deluded judgment only, or a much worſe cauſe. It could plainly be reſolved into no other, than the wilful agency of the malignant affections; which, wherever they prevail, corrupt the ſimple and ingenuous ſenſe of the mind, either, 1. [line 83] *in engendering high conceits of ſelf*, and referring all degrees of excellence to the ſuppoſed infallible ſtandard of every man's own judgment; or, 2. [to line 86] *in creating a falſe ſhame*, and reluctancy in us to be directed by the judgments of others, though *ſeen* to be more equitable, whenever they are found in oppoſition to our own rooted and preconceived opinions. The bigotry of *old men* is, eſpecially, for this reaſon, invincible. They hold themſelves upbraided by the ſharper ſight of their juniors; and regard the adoption of new ſentiments, at their years, as ſo much abſolute loſs on the ſide of the dead ſtock of their old literary poſſeſſions. Theſe conſiderations are generally of ſuch prevalency in grey veteran critics, that [from line 86 to 90] whenever, as in the caſe before us, they pretend an uncommon zeal for antiquity, and their ſagacity piques itſelf on detecting the ſuperior value of obſcure rhapſodiſts, whom nobody elſe reads, or is able to underſtand, we may be ſure the ſecret view of ſuch, is, not the generous defence and

patronage

Ingeniis non ille favet plauditque sepultis,
Nostra sed impugnat, nos nostraque lividus odit.
Quod si tam Graiis novitas invisa fuisset,
Quam nobis; quid nunc esset vetus? aut quid habaret,
Quod legeret tereretque viritim publicus usus?

COMMENTARY.

patronage of *ancient* wit, but a low malevolent pleasure in decrying the just pretensions of the *modern*.

Ingeniis non ille favet plauditque sepultis,
Nostra sed impugnat, nos nostraque lividus odit.

The poet had, now, made appear the unreasonable attachment of his countrymen to the fame of their old writers. He had thoroughly unravelled the sophistical pretences, on which it affected to justify itself; and had even dared to unveil the *secret iniquitous principle*, from which it arose. It was now time to look forward to the *effects* of it; which were, in truth, very baleful; its poisonous influences being of force to corrupt and wither, as it were, in the bud, every rising species of excellence, and finally to check the very hopes and tendencies of true genius. Nothing can be truer than this remark; which he further enforces, and brings home to his adversaries, by asking a pertinent question, to which it concerned them to make a serious reply. They had magnified, line 18, the perfection of the Greek models. But what [to line 93] if the Greeks had conceived the same aversion to *novelties*, as the Romans? How then could *those* models have ever been furnished to the public use? The question, we see, insinuates what was before

Ut primum poſitis nugari Graecia bellis
Coepit, et in vitium fortuna labier aequa;
Nunc athletarum ſtudiis, nunc arſit equorum:
Marmoris, aut eboris fabros, aut aeris amavit;
Suſpendit picta vultum mentemque tabella;
Nunc tibicinibus, nunc eſt gaviſa tragoedis:
Sub nutrice puella velut ſi luderet infans,

COMMENTARY.

before affirmed to be the truth of the caſe; that the unrivalled excellence of the Greek poets proceeded only from long and vigorous exerciſe, and a painful uninterrupted application to the arts of verſe. The liberal ſpirit of that people led them to countenance every new attempt towards ſuperior literary excellence; and ſo, by the public favour, their writings, from rude eſſays, became at length the ſtandard and admiration of ſucceeding wits. The Romans had treated their adventurers quite otherwiſe, and the effect was anſwerable. This is the purport of what to a common eye may look like a *digreſſion* [from line 93 to 108] in which is delineated the very different genius and practice of the two nations. For the Greeks [to line 102] had applied themſelves, in the intervals of their leiſure from the toils of war, to the cultivation of every ſpecies of elegance, whether in *arts*, or *letters*; and loved to cheriſh the public emulation, by affording a free indulgence to the various and volatile diſpoſition of the times. The activity of theſe reſtleſs ſpirits was inceſſantly attempting ſome new and untried *form* of compoſition; and, when *that* was brought to a due degree of perfection, it turned, *in good time*, to the cultivation of ſome *other*.

Quod

Quod cupide petiit, mature plena reliquit.
Quid placet, aut odio eſt, quod non mutabile credas?
Hoc paces habuere bonae, ventique ſecundi.
Romae dulce diu fuit et ſollenne, reclusa
Mane domo vigilare, clienti promere jura:
Scriptos nominibus rectis expendere nummos

COMMENTARY.

Quod cupide petiit, mature plena reliquit.

So that the very caprice of *humour* [line 101] aſſiſted, in this libertine country, to advance and help forard the public taſte. Such was the effect of *peace and opportunity* with them.

Hoc paces habuere bonae ventique ſecundi.

Whereas the *Romans* [to line 108] by a more imposed temperament and ſaturnine complexionhad devoted their pains to the purſuit of domeſtic utiſies, and a more dextrous management of the *arts of gain*. The conſequence of which was, that men, [to line 117] by the decay of the old frugal ſpirithe neceſſary effect of overflowing plenty and eaſe,hey began, at length, to ſeek out for the elegancis of life; and *a fit of verſifying*, the firſt of all leral amuſements, that uſually ſeizes an idle peoplehad come upon them; their ignorance of rules, andrant of exerciſe in the art of writing, rendered hem wholly unfit to ſucceed in it. So that their aukard attempts in poetry were now as diſgraceful toheir *taſte*, as their total diſregard of it, before, had ben to their *civility*. The root of this miſchief wa the idolatrous regard paid to their ancient poets: wch unluckily, when the public emulation was ſ a

gng,

Majores audire, minori dicere, per quae
Ceſcere res poſſet, minui damnoſa libido.
Mutavit mentem populus levis, et calet uno
Scribendi ſtudio: puerique patreſque ſeveri
Fronde comas vincti coenant, et carmina dictant.
Ipſe ego, qui nullos me adfirmo ſcribere verſus,
Invenior Parthis mendacior; et prius orto
Sole vigil, calamum et chartas et ſcrinia poſco.
Navem agere ignarus navis timet: abrotonum aegro
Non audet, niſi qui didicit, dare: quod medicorum eſt, 115
Promittunt medici: tractant fabrilia fabri:
Scribimus indocti doctique poemata paſſim.

COMMENTARY.

ging, not only checked its progreſs, but gave it a wrong bias; and, inſtead of helping true genius to outſtrip the lame and tardy endeavours of ancient wit, drew it aſide into a vicious and unprofitable mimicry of its very imperfections. Whence it had come to paſs, that, whereas in other *arts*, the previous knowledge of rules is required to the practice of them, in matters of *verſifying*, no ſuch qualification was deemed neceſſary.

Scribimus indocti doctique poemata paſſim.

This miſchance was *doubly* fatal to the Latin poetry. For the ill ſucceſs of theſe blind adventurers had increaſed the original miſchief, by confirming, as it muſt needs muſt, the ſuperſtitious reverence of the old writers; and inſenſibly brought, as well the art itſelf,

Hic error tamen et levis haec inſania quantas
Virtutes habeat, ſic collige: vatis avarus
Non temere eſt animus: verſus amat, hoc ſtudet unum;
Detrimenta, fugas ſervorum, incendia ridet:
Non fraudem ſocio, puerove incogitat ullam
Pupillo: vivit ſiliquis, et pane ſecundo:
Militiae quamquam piger et malus, utilis urbi;
Si das hoc, parvis quoque rebus magna juvari;
Os tenerum pueri balbumque poëta figurat:
Torquet ab obſcoenis jam nunc ſermonibus aurem;
Mox etiam pectus praeceptis format amicis,
Aſperitatis et invidiae corrector et irae:

COMMENTARY.

itſelf, as the modern profeſſors of it, into diſrepute with the diſcerning public. The vindication of *both*, then, at this critical juncture, was become highly ſeaſonable; and to this, which was the poet's main purpoſe, he addreſſes himſelf through the remainder of the epiſtle.

118 to the end. HIC ERROR TAMEN, &c.] Having ſufficiently obviated the popular and reigning prejudices againſt the modern poets, his office of *advocate* for their fame, which he had undertaken, and was now to diſcharge, in form, required him to ſet their real merits and pretenſions in a juſt light. He enters therefore immediately on this taſk. And, in drawing the character of the *true poet*, endeavours to impreſs the emperor with as advantageous an idea as poſſible, of the worth and dignity of his calling. And this, not in the fierce inſulting tone of a zealot

Recte facta refert; orientia tempora notis
Instruit exemplis; inopem solatur et aegrum.
Castis cum pueris ignara puella mariti
Disceret unde preces, vatem ni Musa dedisset?
Poscit opem chorus, et praesentia numina sentit;
Caelestis implorat aquas, docta prece blandus;
Avertit morbos, metuenda pericula pellit;
Inpetrat et pacem, et locupletem frugibus annum:
Carmine Dî superi placantur, carmine Manes.

COMMENTARY.

for the *honour of his order*, which to the *great* is always disgusting, and where the occasion is, confessedly, not of the last importance, plainly absurd; but with that unpretending air of insinuation, which good sense, improved by a thorough knowledge of the world, teaches: with that seeming indifference, which disarms prejudice: in a word, with that gracious *smile in his aspect*, which his strong admirer and faint copyer, Persius, so justly noted in him, and which convinces almost without the help of argument; or, to say it more truly, *persuades* where it doth not properly *convince*. In this disposition he sets out on his defence; and yet omits no *particular*, which could any way serve to the real recommendation of *poets*, or which indeed the gravest or warmest of their friends have ever pleaded in their behalf. This defence consists [from line 118 to 139] in bringing into view their many *civil*, *moral*, and *religious* virtues. For the muse, as the poet contends, (and nothing could be more likely to conciliate the esteem of the politic emperor) administers, in this threefold capacity, to the service of the state.

But

Agricolæ prisci, fortes, parvoque beati,
Condita post frumenta, levantes tempore festo
Corpus et ipsum animum spe finis dura ferentem,
Cum sociis operum pueris et conjuge fida,
Tellurem porco, Silvanum lacte piabant,
Floribus et vino Genium memorem brevis ævi.
Fescennina per hunc inventa licentia morem
Versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit;
Libertaque recurrentis accepta per annos

COMMENTARY.

But *religion*, which was its *subject end*, was, besides, the *first object* of poetry. The dramatic muse, in particular, had her birth, and derived her very character, from it. This circumstance then leads him with advantage, to give an historical deduction of the rise and progress of the Latin poesy, from its first rude workings in the days of barbarous superstition, through every successive period of its improvement, down to his own times. Such a view of its descent and gradual reformation, was directly to the poet's purpose. For, having magnified the virtues of his order, as of such importance to society, the question naturally occurred, by what unhappy means it had fallen out, that it was, nevertheless, in such low estimation with the public. The answer is, that the state of the Latin poetry, as yet, was very rude and imperfect: and so the public disregard was occasioned, only, by its not having attained to that degree of perfection, of which its nature was capable. Many reasons had concurred to keep the Latin poetry in this state, which he proceeds to enumerate. The *first and principal* was [from line 139 to 164] the little

Luſit amabiliter: donec jam ſaevus apertam
In rabiem coepit verti jocus, et per honeſtas
Ire domos impune minax. doluere cruento
Dente laceſſiti: fuit intactis quoque cura
Conditione ſuper communi: quin etiam lex
Poenaque lata, malo quae nollet carmine quemquam
Deſcribi. vertere modum, formidine fuſtis
Ad bene dicendum delectandumque redacti.
Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artis

COMMENTARY.

attention paid *to critical learning, and the cultivation of a correct and juſt ſpirit of compoſition.* Which, again, had ariſen from the coarſe illiberal diſpoſition of the Latin muſe, who had been nurtured and brought up under the roof of rural ſuperſtition; and this, by an impute mixture of licentious jollity, had ſo corrupted her very nature, that it was only by ſlow degrees, and not till the conqueſt of Greece had imported arts and learning into Italy, that ſhe began to chaſtiſe her manners, and aſſume a juſter and more becoming deportment. And ſtill ſhe was but in the condition of a ruſtic *beauty*, when practiſing her aukward airs, and making her firſt ungracious eſſays towards a *manner*.

in longum tamen aevum
Manſerunt, hodieque manent veſtigia ruris.

Her late acquaintance with the Greek models had, indeed, improved her air, and inſpired an inclination to emulate their nobleſt graces. But how ſucceſsfully, we are given to underſtand from her unequal attempts in the two ſublimer ſpecies of their poetry, the TRAGIC, and COMIC DRAMAS.

1. [from

Intulit agreſti Latio. ſic horridus ille
Defluxit numerus Saturnius, et grave virus
Munditiae pepulere: ſed in longum tamen aevum
Manſerunt, hodieque manent, veſtigia ruris.
Serus enim Graecis admovit acumina chartis;
Et poſt Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit,
Quid Sophocles et Theſpis et Aeſchylus utile ferrent:
Tentavit quoque rem, ſi digne vertere poſſet:
Et placuit ſibi, natura ſublimis et acer.

COMMENTARY.

1. [from line 160 to 168.] *The ſtudy of the Greek tragedians* had very naturally, and to good purpoſe, in the infancy of their taſte, diſpoſed the Latin writers to *tranſlation*. Here they ſtuck long; for their tragedy, even in the Auguſtan age, was little elſe; and yet they ſucceeded but indifferently in it. The bold and animated genius of Rome was, it is readily owned, well ſuited to this work. And for force of colouring, and a truly tragic elevation, the Roman poets came not behind their great originals. But unfortunately their judgment was unformed, and they were too ſoon ſatisfied with their own productions. Strength and fire was all they endeavoured after. And with this praiſe they ſate down perfectly contented. The diſcipline of correction, the curious poliſhing of art, which had given ſuch a luſtre to the Greek tragedians, they knew nothing of; or, to ſpeak their caſe more truly, they held diſgraceful to the high ſpirit and energy of the Roman genius:

TURPEM PUTAT IN SCRIPTIS METUITQUE LITURAM,

Nam ſpirat tragicum ſatis, et feliciter audet;
Sed turpem putat inſcitus metuitque lituram.
Creditur, ex medio quia res arceſſit, habere
Sudoris minimum; ſed habet comoedia tanto
Plus oneris, quanto veniae minus. aſpice, Plautus
Quo pacto partis tutetur amantis ephebi: 175
Ut patris attenti, lenonis ut inſidioſi:
Quantus ſit Doſſennus edacibus in paraſitis:
Quam non adſtricto percurrat pulpita ſocco.
Geſtit enim nummum in loculos demittere; poſt hoc

COMMENTARY.

2. It did not fare better with them [from line 168 to 175] in their attempts to rival *the Greek comedy*. They prepoſterouſly ſet out with the notion of its being eaſier to execute this drama than the tragic: whereas, to hit its genuine character with exactneſs, was, in truth, a point of much more difficulty. As the *ſubject* of comedy was taken from common life, they ſuppoſed an ordinary degree of care might ſuffice to do it juſtice. No wonder, then, they overlooked, or never came up to, that nice adjuſtment of the *manners*, that truth and decorum of *character*, wherein the glory of comic painting conſiſts, and which none but the quickeſt eye can diſcern, and the ſteddieſt hand execute; and, in the room, amuſed us with *high colouring*, and *falſe drawing*; with *extravagant, aggravated portraitures*; which, neglecting the modeſt proportion of real life, are the certain arguments of an unpractiſed pencil, or vicious taſte.

What

Securus, cadat an recto ſtet fabula talo.
Quem tulit ad ſcenam ventoſo gloria curru,
Exanimat lentus ſpectator, ſedulus inflat.
Sic leve, ſic parvum eſt, animum quod laudis avarum
Subruit ac reficit. valeat res ludicra, ſi me
Palma negata macrum, donata reducit opimum.
Saepe, etiam audacem, fugat hoc terretque poetam;

COMMENTARY.

What contributed to this proſtitution of the comic muſe, was [to line 177] the ſeducement of that corruptneſs of all virtue, *the love of money*; which had thoroughly infected the Roman wits, and was, in fact, the ſole object of their pains. Hence, provided they could but catch the applauſes of the people, to which the pleaſantry of the comic ſcene more eſpecially aſpires, and ſo ſecure a good round *price* from the magiſtrates, whoſe office it was to furniſh this kind of entertainment, they became indifferent to every nobler view and honeſter purpoſe. In particular [to line 182] they ſo little conſidered *fame and the praiſe of good writing*, that they made it the ordinary topic of their ridicule; repreſenting it as the mere illuſion of vanity, and the pitiable infirmity of *lean-witted* minds, to be catched by the lure of ſo empty and unſubſtantial a benefit.

Though, were any one, in defiance of public ridicule, ſo *daring* (as there is no occaſion in life, which calls for, or demonſtrates a greater firmneſs) as frankly to avow and ſubmit himſelf to this generous *motive*, the ſureſt inſpirer of every virtuous excellence, yet one thing remained to check and weaken the vigour of his emulation. This [from line 182 to 187]

Quod numero plures, virtute et honore minores,
Indocti, ſtolidique, et depugnare parati
Si diſcordet eques, media inter carmina poſcunt
Aut urſum aut pugiles: his nam plebecula gaudet.
Verum equiti quoque jam migravit ab aure voluptas
Omnis, ad ingratos oculos, et gaudia vana.
Quatuor aut pluris aulaea premuntur in horas;

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was the folly and ill taſte of the undiſcerning multitude; who, in all countries, have a great ſhare in determining the fate and character of ſcenical repreſentations, but, from the popular conſtitution of the government, were, at Rome, of the firſt conſequence. Theſe, by their rude clamours, and the authority of their numbers, were enough to diſhearten the moſt intrepid genius; when, after all his endeavours to reap the glory of an abſolute work, the action was almoſt ſure to be mangled and broken in upon by the ſhews of *wild beaſts and gladiators*; thoſe *dear delights*, which the Romans, it ſeems, prized much above the higheſt pleaſures of the drama.

Nay, the poet's caſe was ſtill more deſperate. For it was not the untutored rabble, as in other countries, that gave a countenance to theſe illiberal ſports: even *rank and quality*, at Rome, debaſed itſelf in ſhewing the fierceſt paſſion for theſe *ſhews*, and was as ready, as abject commonalty itſelf, to prefer the unimſtructing pleaſures of the *eye* to thoſe of the *ear*.

EQUITI *quoque jam migravit ab aure voluptas*
Omnis ad ingratos oculos et gaudia vana.

And,

Dum fugiunt equitum turmae, peditumque catervae:
Mox trahitur manibus regum fortuna retortis:
Eſſeda feſtinant, pilenta, petorrita, naves:
Captivum portatur ebur, captiva Corinthus.
Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus; ſeu
Diverſum confuſa genus panthera camelo,
Sive elephas albus volgi converterit ora:

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And, becauſe this barbarity of taſte had contributed more than any thing elſe to deprave the poetry of the ſtage, and diſcourage its beſt maſters from ſtudying its perfection, what follows [from line 189 to 207] is intended, in all the keenneſs of raillery, to ſatirize this madneſs. It afforded an ample field for the poet's ridicule. For, beſides the riotous diſorders of their theatre, the ſenſeleſs admiration of *pomp and ſpectacle* in their plays had ſo enchanted his countrymen, that the very decorations of the ſcene, the tricks and trappings of the comedians, were ſurer to catch the applauſes of the gaping multitude, than any regard to the juſtneſs of the poet's deſign, or the beauty of his execution.

Here the poet ſhould naturally have concluded his *defence of the dramatic writers*; having alledged every thing in their favour, that could be urged, plauſibly, from *the ſtate of the Roman ſtage: the genius of the people: and the ſeveral prevailing practices of ill taſte*, which had brought them into diſrepute with the beſt judges. But finding himſelf obliged, in the courſe of this vindication of the modern *ſtage-poets*, to cenſure, as ſharply as their very enemies, the vices and

Spectaret populum ludis attentius ipsis,
Ut sibi præbentem mimo spectacula plura:
Scriptores autem narrare putaret asello
Fabellam surdo. nam quae pervincere voces
Evaluere sonum, referunt quem nostra theatra?
Garganum mugire putes nemus, aut mare Tuscum.
Tanto cum strepitu ludi spectantur, et artes,
Divitiaeque peregrinae: quibus oblitus actor
Cum stetit in scena, concurrit dextera laevae:
Dixit adhuc aliquid? nil sane. quid placet ergo?
Lana Tarentino violas imitata veneno.
Ac ne forte putes me, quae facere ipse recusem,

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defects of their *poetry*; and fearing lest this severity on a sort of writing, to which himself had never pretended, might be misinterpreted as the effect of envy only, and a malignant disposition towards the art itself, under cover of pleading for its *professors*, he therefore frankly avows [from line 208 to 214] his preference of the *dramatic*, to every other species of poetry; declaring the sovereignty of its pathos over the *affections*, and the magic of its illusive scenery on the *imagination*, to be the highest argument of poetic excellence, the last and noblest exercise of the human genius.

One thing still remained. He had taken upon himself to apologize for the Roman poets in *general*; as may be seen from the large terms, in which he proposes his subject.

Hic error tamen et levis haec insania quantas
Virtutes habeat, sic collige.

But

Cum recte tractent alii laudare maligne:
Ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur
Ire poeta; meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet,
Ut magus; et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis.
Verum age, et his, qui se lectori credere malunt,
Quam spectatoris fastidia ferre superbi,
Curam impende brevem: si munus Apolline dignum
Vis complere libris; et vatibus addere calcar,
Ut studio majore petant Helicona virentem.

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But, after a general encomium on the *office* itself, he confines his defence to the *writers for the stage* only. In concluſion then, he was conſtrained, by the very purpoſe of his addreſs, to ſay a word or two in behalf of the remainder of this neglected family; of thoſe, who, as the poet expreſſes it, had *rather truſt to the equity of the cloſet, than ſubject themſelves to the caprice and inſolence of the theatre.*

Now, as before, in aſſerting the honour of the ſtage-poets, he every-where ſuppoſes the emperor's *diſguſt* to have ſprung from the wrong conduct of the poets themſelves, and then extenuates the blame of ſuch *conduct*, by conſidering, ſtill further, the *cauſes* which gave riſe to it; ſo he prudently obſerves the like method here. The politeneſs of his addreſs concedes to Auguſtus, the juſt *offence* he had taken to his brother poets; whoſe honour, however, he contrives to ſave, by ſoftening the *occaſions* of it. This is the drift of what follows [from line 214 to 229] where

Multa quidem nobis [illegible]mus mala saepe poëtae,
(Ut vineta egomet caedam mea) [illegible] tibi librum
Sollicito damus, aut fesso: cum laedimur, [illegible]
Si quis amicorum est ausus reprendere versum:
Cum loca jam recitata revolvimus inrevocati;
Cum lamentamur non adparere labores
Nostros, et tenui deducta poemata filo:

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he pleasantly recounts the several foibles and indiscretions of the muse; but in a way, that could only dispose the emperor to smile at, or at most to pity, her infirmities, not provoke his serious censure and disesteem. They amount, on the whole, but to certain idlenesses of *vanity*, the almost inseparable attendants of *wit*, as well as *beauty*; and may be forgiven in *each*, as implying a strong *desire* of pleasing, or rather as *qualifying* both to please. One of the most exceptionable of these *vanities* was a fond persuasion, too readily taken up by men of parts and genius, that *preferment is the constant pay of merit*; and that, from the moment their talents become known to the public, distinction and advancement are sure to follow. They believed, in short, they had only to convince the world of their superior abilities, to deserve the favour and countenance of their prince. But fond and presumptuous as these hopes are (continues the poet [from line 229 to 244] with all the insinuation of a courtier, and yet with a becoming sense of the dignity of his own character) it may deserve a serious consideration, what poets are fit to be entrusted with the glory of princes; what *ministers* are worth retaining

Cum ſperamus eo rem venturam, ut, ſimul atque
Carmina reſcieris nos fingere, commodus ultro
Arceſſas, et egere vetes, et ſcribere cogas.
Sed tamen eſt operae pretium cognoſcere, qualis
Aedituos habeat belli ſpectata domique
Virtus, indigno non committenda poetae.
Gratus Alexandro regi Magno fuit ille

COMMENTARY.

ing in the ſervice of an illuſtrious VIRTUE, whoſe honours demand to be ſolemnized with a religious reverence, and ſhould not be left to the profanation of vile, unhallowed hands. And, to ſupport the authority of this remonſtrance, he alledges the example of a great monarch, who had diſhonoured himſelf by a neglect of this care; of ALEXANDER THE GREAT, who, when maſter of the world, as Auguſtus now was, perceived, indeed, the importance of gaining a poet to his ſervice; but unluckily choſe ſo ill, that his encomiums (as muſt ever be the caſe with a vile panegyriſt) but tarniſhed the native ſplendor of thoſe virtues, which his office required him to preſent, in their fulleſt and faireſt glory, to the admiration of the world. In his appointment of *artiſts*, whoſe ſkill is, alſo, highly ſerviceable to the fame of princes, he ſhewed a truer judgment. For he ſuffered none but an APELLES and a LYSIPPUS to counterfeit the form and faſhion of his *perſon*. But his *taſte*, which was thus exact, and even *ſubtile* in what concerned the mechanic execution of the *fine arts*, took up with a CHOERILUS, to tranſmit an image of his *mind* to future ages; ſo groſly undiſcerning was he in works of poetry, and the liberal *offerings of the muſe!*

And

Choerilos, incultis qui verſibus et male natis
Rettulit acceptos, regale nomiſma, Philippos.
Sed veluti tractata notam labemque remittunt
Atramenta, fere ſcriptores carmine foedo
Splendida facta linunt. idem rex ille, poëma
Qui tam ridiculum tam care prodigus emit,
Edicto vetuit; ne quis ſe, praeter Apellen
Pingeret, aut alius Lyſippo cuderet aera
Fortis Alexandri voltum ſimulantia. quod ſi
Judicium ſubtile videndis artibus illud
Ad libros et ad haec Muſarum dona vocares;
Boeotum in craſſo jurares aëre natum.
At neque dedecorant tua de ſe judicia, atque

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And thus the poet makes a double uſe of the ill judgment of this imperial critic. For nothing could better demonſtrate the importance of *poetry* to the honour of *greatneſs*, than that this illuſtrious conqueror, without any particular knowledge or diſcernment in the *art* itſelf, ſhould think himſelf concerned to court its aſſiſtance. And, then, what could be more likely to engage the emperor's further protection and love of *poetry*, than the inſinuation (which is made with infinite addreſs) that, as he honoured it equally, ſo he underſtood its merits much better? For [from line 245 to 248, where, by a beautiful concurrence, the flattery of his prince falls in with the honeſter purpoſe of doing juſtice to the memory of his friends] it was not the ſame unintelligent liberality, which had cheriſhed Choerilus, that poured the full ſtream of Caeſar's bounty

Munera, quae multa dantis cum laude tulerunt
Dilecti tibi Virgilius Variusque poetae:
Nec magis expreſſi vultus per aënea ſigna,
Quam per vatis opus mores animique virorum
Clarorum apparent. nec ſermones ego mallem
Repentis per humum, quam res componere geſtas,
Terrarumque ſitus, et flumina dicere, et arcis
Montibus impoſitas, et barbara regna, tuiſque
Auſpiciis totum confecta duella per orbem,
Clauſtraque cuſtodem pacis cohibentia Janum,
Et formidatam Parthis, te principe, Romam:
Si quantum cuperem, poſſem quoque. ſed neque parvum

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bounty on ſuch perſons, as VARIUS and VIRGIL. And, as if the ſpirit of theſe inimitable poets had, at once, ſeized him, he breaks away in a bolder run of verſe [from line 248 to 250] *to ſing the triumphs of an art*, which expreſſed the *manners and the mind* in fuller and more durable *relief*, than painting, or even ſculpture, had ever been able to give to the external *figure*: And [from line 250 to the end] *apologizes for himſelf* in adopting the humbler epiſtolary *ſpecies*, when a warmth of inclination and the unrivaled glories of his prince were continually urging him on to the nobler, *encomiaſtic* poetry. His excuſe, in brief, is taken from the conſcious inferiority of his genius, and a tenderneſs for the fame of the emperor, which is never more diſſerved than by the officious ſedulity of bad poets to do it honour. And with this apology, one while condeſcending to the

unſeigned

Carmen majeſtas recipit tua: nec meus audet
Rem tentare pudor, quam vires ferre recuſent.
Sedulitas autem ſtulte, quem diligit, urguet;
Praecipue cum ſe numeris commendat et arte.
Diſcit enim citius, meminitque libentius illud
Quod quis deridet, quam quod probat et veneratur.
Nil moror officium, quod me gravat: ac neque ficto
In pejus voltu proponi cereus uſquam,
Nec prave factis decorari verſibus opto:
Ne rubeam pingui donatus munere, et una
Cum ſcriptore meo capſa porrectus operta,
Deferar in vicum vendentem thus et odores,
Et piper, et quicquid chartis amicitur ineptis.

COMMENTARY.

unfeigned humility of a perſon, ſenſible of the *kind and meaſure* of his abilities, and then, again, ſuſtaining itſelf by a freedom, and even familiarity, which real merit knows, on certain occaſions, to take without offence, the epiſtle concludes.

If the general opinion may be truſted, this, which was one of the *laſt*, is alſo among the *nobleſt*, of the great poet's compoſitions. Perhaps, the reader, who conſiders it in the plain and ſimple order, to which the foregoing analyſis hath reduced it, may ſatisfy himſelf, that this praiſe hath not been undeſervedly beſtowed.

NOTES

NOTES

ON THE

EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS.

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EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM.] The epiſtle to AUGUSTUS is *an apology for the Roman poets*. The epiſtle to the PISOS, *a criticiſm on their poetry*. *This* to Auguſtus may be therefore conſidered as a ſequel of *that* to the Piſos; and which could not well be omitted; for the author's deſign of forwarding the ſtudy and improvement of the *art of poetry* required him to beſpeak the public favour to its *profeſſors*.

But as, *there*, in correcting the abuſes of their poetry, he mixes, occaſionally, ſome encomiums on *poets*; ſo, *here*, in pleading the cauſe of the poets, we find him interweaving inſtructions on *poetry*. Which was but according to the writer's *occaſions* in each work. For the freedom of his cenſure on the *art of poetry* was to be ſoftened by ſome expreſſions of his good-will towards the poets; and this apology for their *fame* had been too direct and unmanaged, but for the qualify-

ing appearance of its intending the further benefit of the *art*. The coincidence, then, of the ſame general *method*, as well as *deſign*, in the two epiſtles, made it not improper to give them together, and on the ſame footing, to the public. Though both the *ſubject* and *method* of this laſt are ſo clear as to make a continued commentary upon it much leſs wanted.

4. SI LONGO SERMONE MORER TUA TEMPORA, CAESAR.] The poet is thought to begin with apologizing for the *ſhortneſs of this epiſtle*. And yet it is one of the longeſt he ever wrote. How is this inconſiſtency to be reconciled? "Horace parle pêut être ainſi pour ne pas "rebûter Auguſte, et pour lui faire connôitre, "qu'il auroit fait une lettre, beaucoup plus "longue, s'il avoit ſuivi ſon inclination." This is the beſt account of the matter we have, hitherto, been able to come at. But the familiar civility of ſuch a compliment, as M. Dacier ſuppoſes, though it might be well enough to an *equal*, or, if dreſſed up in ſpruce phraſes, might make a figure in the *lettres familieres et galantes* of his own nation; yet is ſurely of a caſt entirely foreign to the Roman gravity, more eſpecially in an addreſs to the emperor of the world. Mr. Pope, perceiving the abſurdity of the common interpretation, ſeems to have read the lines *interro-*

interrogatively; which, though it ſaves the ſenſe, and ſuits the purpoſe of the Engliſh poet very well, yet neither agrees with the language nor ſerious air of the original. The caſe, I believe, was this. The genius of epiſtolary writing demands, that the ſubject-matter be not abruptly delivered, or haſtily obtruded on the perſon addreſſed; but, as the law of decorum preſcribes (for the rule holds in *writing*, as in *converſation*), be gradually and reſpectfully introduced to him. This obtains more particularly in applications to the *great*, and on important ſubjects. But, now, the poet, being to addreſs his prince on a point of no ſmall delicacy, and on which he foreſaw he ſhould have occaſion to hold him pretty long, prudently contrives to get, as ſoon as poſſible, into his ſubject; and, to that end, hath the art to convert the very tranſgreſſion of this rule into the juſteſt and moſt beautiful compliment.

That cautious preparation, which is ordinarily requiſite in our approaches to *greatneſs*, had been, the poet obſerves, in the preſent caſe, highly unſeaſonable, as the buſineſs and intereſts of the empire muſt, in the mean time, have ſtood ſtill and been ſuſpended. By *ſermone* then we are to underſtand, not the *body* of the epiſtle, but the proeme or *introduction* only. The *body*, as of public concern, might be allowed to engage, at full length, the emperor's attention. But the

introduction, conſiſting of *ceremonial* only, the *common good* required him to ſhorten as much as poſſible. It was no time for uſing an inſignificant preamble, or, in our Engliſh phraſe, of making *long ſpeeches*. The reaſon, too, is founded, not merely in the elevated rank of the emperor, but in the peculiar diligence and ſollicitude, with which, hiſtory tells us, he endeavoured to promote, by various ways, the intereſts of his country. So that the compliment is as *juſt* as it is *polite*. It may be further obſerved, that *ſermo* is uſed in Horace, to ſignify the ordinary ſtyle of converſation. [See Sat. i. 3. 65. and iv. 42.] and therefore not improperly denotes the familiarity of the epiſtolary addreſs, which, in its eaſy expreſſion, ſo nearly approaches to it.

13. URIT ENIM FULGORE SUO, QUI PRAEGRAVAT ARTES INFRA SE POSITAS: EXTINCTUS AMABITUR IDEM.] The poet, we may ſuppoſe, ſpoke this from experience. And ſo might another of later date when he complained:

Unhappy Wit, like moſt miſtaken things,
Atones not for that envy which it brings.

Eſſay on Crit. ver. 494.

Unleſs it be thought, that, as this was ſaid by him very early in life, it might rather paſs for a prediction of his future fortunes. Be this as it will,

will, the ſufferings, which *unhappy wit* is conceived to bring on itſelf from the *envy*, it excites, are, I am apt to think, ſomewhat aggravated; at leaſt if one may judge from the effects it had on this *complainant*. That which would be likely to afflict him moſt, was the *envy* of his friends. But the generoſity of theſe deſerves to be recorded. The *wits* took no offence at his fame, till they found it eclipſe their *own*: And his *philoſopher and guide*, it is well known, ſtuck cloſe to him, till another and brighter ſtar had gotten the aſcendant. Or, ſuppoſing there might be ſome malice in the caſe, it is plain there was little miſchief. And for this little the poet's creed provides an ample recompence. EXTINCTUS AMABITUR IDEM: not, we may be ſure, by *thoſe* he moſt improved, enlightened, and obliged; but by late impartial poſterity; and by ONE at leaſt of his ſurviving friends, who generouſly took upon him the patronage of his fame, and who inherits his genius and his virtues.

14. EXTINCTUS AMABITUR IDEM.] *Envy*, ſays a diſcerning antient, *is the vice of thoſe, who are too weak to contend, and too proud to ſubmit: vitium eorum, qui nec cedere volunt, nec poſſunt contendere* [*a*]. Which, while it ſufficiently expoſes the folly and malignity of this hateful

[*a*] Quinctilian, lib. xi. c. 1.

paſſion, ſecures the honour of human nature; as implying at the ſame time, that its worſt corruptions are not without a mixture of generoſity in them. For this falſe pride in *refuſing to ſubmit*, though abſurd and miſchievous enough, when unſupported by all *ability to contend*, yet diſcovers ſuch a ſenſe of ſuperior excellence, as ſhews, how difficult it is for human nature to diveſt itſelf of all virtue. Accordingly, when the too powerful *ſplendor* is withdrawn, our natural veneration of it takes place: *Extinctus amabitur idem.* This is the true expoſition of the poet's ſentiment; which therefore appears juſt the reverſe of what his French interpreter would fix upon him. "La juſtice, que nous "rendons aux grands hommes après leur mort, "ne vient pas de l'AMOUR, que nous avons pour "leur *vertu*, mais de la HAINE, dont notre cœur "eſt rempli pour ceux, qui ont pris leur PLACE." An obſervation, which only becomes the miſanthropy of an old cynic virtue, or the ſelfiſhneſs of a modern ſyſtem of ethics.

15. PRAESENTI TIBI MATUROS, &c. to line 18.] We are not to wonder at this and the like extravagances of adulation in the Auguſtan poets. They had ample authority for what they did of this ſort. We know, that altars were erected to the emperor by the command of the ſenate; and

and that he was publickly invoked, as an eſtabliſhed, tutelary divinity. But the ſeeds of the corruption had been ſown much earlier. For we find it ſprung up, or rather (as of all the ill weeds, which the teeming ſoil of human depravity throws forth, none is more thriving and grows faſter than this of *flattery*) flouriſhing at its height, in the tyranny of J. CAESAR. Balbus, in a letter to Cicero, [Ep. ad Att. l. ix.] *ſwears by the health and ſafety of Cæſar: ità incolumi Caeſare, moriar.* And Dio tells us [l. xliv.] that it was, by the expreſs injunction of the ſenate, decreed, even in Caeſar's life-time, that the Romans ſhould bind themſelves by this oath. The ſenate alſo, as we learn from the ſame writer, [l. xliii.] upon receiving the news of his defeat of Pompey's ſons, cauſed his ſtatue to be ſet up, in the temple of Romulus, with this inſcription, DEO INVICTO [*b*].

It is true, theſe and ſtill greater honours had been long paid to the Roman governors in their

[*b*] Θεῷ ἀνικήτῳ ἐπιγράψαντες. Though, to complete the farce, it was with the greateſt ſhyneſs and reluctance, that the humility of theſe lords of the univerſe could permit itſelf to accept the enſigns of deity, as the court-hiſtorians of thoſe times are forward to inform us. An affectation, which was thought to ſit ſo well upon them, that we find it afterwards practiſed, in the abſurdeſt and moſt impudent manner, by the worſt of their ſucceſſors.

provinces,

provinces, by the *abject, ſlaviſh Aſiatics*. And this, no doubt, facilitated the admiſſion of ſuch idolatries into the capital [*c*]. But that a people, from the higheſt notions of an independent republican equality, could ſo ſoon be brought to this proſtrate adoration of their firſt *lord*, is perfectly amazing! In this, they ſhewed themſelves ripe for ſervitude. Nothing could keep them out of the hands of a maſter. And one can ſcarcely read ſuch accounts as theſe, without condemning the vain efforts of dying patriotiſm, which laboured ſo fruitleſſly, may one not almoſt ſay, ſo weakly? to protract the liberty of ſuch a people. Who can, after this, wonder at the incenſe, offered up by a few court-poets? The adulation of Virgil, which has given ſo much offence, and of Horace, who keeps pace with him, was, we ſee, but the authorized language of the times; preſented indeed with addreſs, but without the heightenings and privileged licence of their profeſſion. For, to their credit, it muſt be owned, that, though in the office of *poets*, they were to comply with the popular voice, and echo it back to the ears of ſovereignty; yet, as *men*, they had too much good ſenſe, and too ſcrupulous a regard to the

[*c*] See a learned and accurate diſſertation on the ſubject in HIST. DE L'ACAD. DES INSCR. &c. tom. i.

dignity

dignity of their characters, to exaggerate and go beyond it.

It ſhould, in all reaſon, ſurprize and diſguſt us ſtill more, that modern writers have not always ſhewn themſelves ſo diſcrete. The grave and learned LIPSIUS was not aſhamed, even without the convenient pretext of popular flattery, or poetic *allusion*, in ſo many words, to make a god of his patron: who, though neither king, nor pope, was yet the next beſt material for this manufacture, an archbiſhop. For, though the critic knew, that it was *not every wood that will make a Mercury*, yet nobody would diſpute the fitneſs of that, which grew ſo near the altar. In plain words, I am ſpeaking of an archbiſhop of MECHLIN, whom, after a deal of fulſome compliment (which was the vice of the man), he exalts at laſt, with a pagan complaiſance, into the order of deities. "Ad haec," ſays he, "erga omnes humanitas et facilitas me "faciunt, ut omnes te non tanquàm hominem "aliquem de noſtro coetu, ſed tanquam DEUM "QUENDAM DE COELO DELAPSUM INTUEAN-"TUR ET ADMIRENTUR."

16. JURANDASQUE TUUM PER NUMEN PONIMUS ARAS.] On this idea of the APOTHEOSIS, which was the uſual mode of flattery in the Auguſtan age, but, as having the countenance of

of public authority, ſometimes inartificially enough employed, Virgil hath projected one of the nobleſt allegories in ancient poetry, and at the ſame time hath given to it all the force of *juſt* compliment, the *occaſion* itſelf allowed. *Each* of theſe excellencies was to be expected from his talents. For, as his genius led him to the *ſublime*; ſo his exquiſite judgment would inſtruct him to palliate this bold fiction, and qualify, as much as poſſible, the ſhocking adulation, implied in it. So ſingular a beauty deſerves to be ſhewn at large.

The *third* GEORGIC ſets out with an apology for the low and ſimple argument of that work, which, yet, the poet eſteemed, for its novelty, preferable to the ſublimer, but trite, themes of the Greek writers. Not but he intended, on ſome future occaſion, to adorn a nobler ſubject. This was the great plan of the Aeneïs, which he now *prefigures* and unfolds at large. For, taking advantage of the nobleſt privilege of his *art*, he breaks away, in a fit of *prophetic* enthuſiaſm, to fortel his ſucceſſes in this projected enterprize, and, under the imagery of the ancient *triumph*, which comprehends, or ſuggeſts to the imagination, whatever is moſt auguſt in human affairs, to delineate the future glories of this ambitious deſign. The whole conception, as we ſhall ſee, is of the utmoſt grandeur and magni-

magnificence; though, according to the uſual management of the poet (which, as not being apprehended by his critics, hath furniſhed occaſion, even to the beſt of them, to charge him with a want of the *ſublime*) he hath contrived to ſoften and *familiarize* its appearance to the reader, by the artful manner in which it is introduced. It ſtands thus:

tentanda via eſt, qua me quoque poſſim
Tollere humo, VICTORQUE *virûm volitare per ora.*

This idea of *victory*, thus caſually dropped, he makes the baſis of his imagery; which, by means of this gradual preparation, offers itſelf eaſily to the apprehenſion, though it thereby loſes, as the poet deſigned it ſhould, much of that broad *glare*, in which writers of leſs judgment love to ſhew their ideas, as tending to ſet the common reader at a gaze. The allegory then proceeds:

Primus ego patrium mecum (modo vita ſuppetat)
Avum reducam vertice Muſas.

The projected conqueſt was no leſs than that of all the *Grecian Muſes* at once; whom, to carry on the decorum of the allegory, he threatens, 1. to force from their high and advantageous ſituation on the ſummit of the *Aonian mount*; and, 2. bring *captive* with him into Italy: the *former* circumſtance intimating to us the difficulty

ficulty and danger of the enterprize; and the *latter*, his complete execution of it.

The *palmy*, triumphal entry, which was uſual to victors on their return from foreign ſucceſſes, follows:

Primus Idumaeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas.

But ancient conquerors did not hold it ſufficient to reap this tranſient fruit of their labours. They were ambitious to conſecrate their glory to immortality, by a *temple*, or other public monument, which was to be built out of the ſpoils of the conquered cities or countries. This, the reader ſees, is ſuitable to the idea of the great work propoſed; which was, out of the old remains of Grecian art, to compoſe a *new* one, that ſhould comprize the virtues of them all: as, in fact, the Aeneïd is known to unite in itſelf whatever is moſt excellent, not in Homer only, but, univerſally, in the wits of Greece. The everlaſting monument of the *marble* temple is then reared:

Et viridi in campo templum de MARMORE *ponam.*

And, becauſe ancient ſuperſtition uſually preferred, for theſe purpoſes, the banks of *rivers* to other ſituations, therefore the poet, in beautiful alluſion to the ſite of ſome of the moſt celebrated pagan temples, builds *his* on the MINCIUS. We

ſee

ſee with what a ſcrupulous propriety the allusion is carried on:

Propter aquam, tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat
MINCIUS, *et tenera prætexit arundine ripas.*

Next, this temple was to be dedicated, as a monument of the victor's *piety*, as well as glory, to ſome propitious, tutelary deity, under whoſe auſpices the great adventure had been atchieved. The *dedication* is then made to the poet's *divinity*, Auguſtus:

In medio mihi CAESAR *erit, templumque tenebit.*

TEMPLUM TENEBIT. The expreſſion is emphatical; as intimating to us, and prefiguring the ſecret purpoſe of the Aeneis, which was, in the perſon of Aeneas, to ſhadow forth and conſecrate the character of Auguſtus. His divinity was to fill and *ſtamp* that great work. And the ample circuit of the epic plan was projected only, as a more awful incloſure of that auguſt preſence, which was to *inhabit* and ſolemnize the vaſt round of this poetic building.

And now the wonderful addreſs of the poet's artifice appears. The mad ſervility of his country had *deified* the emperor in good earneſt: and his brother poets made no ſcruple to *worſhip* in his temples, and to come before him with handfuls of *real* incenſe, ſmoking from the altars. But the ſobriety of Virgil's adoration was of another

another caſt. He ſeizes this circumſtance only to *embody* a poetical fiction; which, on the ſuppoſition of an actual *deification*, hath all the force of compliment, which the *fact* implies, and yet, as preſented through the chaſte veil of allegory, eludes the offence, which the *naked* recital muſt needs have given to ſober and reaſonable men. Had the emperor's *popular* divinity been flatly acknowledged and adored, the praiſe, even under Virgil's management, had been inſufferable for its extravagance; and, without ſome ſupport for his poetical *numen* to reſt upon, the figure had been more forced and ſtrained, than the rules of juſt writing allow. As it is, the hiſtorical truth of his *apotheoſis* authorizes and ſupports the *fiction*; and the fiction, in its turn, ſerves to refine and palliate the *hiſtory*.

The Aeneïs being, by the poet's improvement of this circumſtance, thus naturally predicted under the image of a *temple*, we may expect to find a cloſe and ſtudied analogy betwixt them. The great, component parts of the *one* will, no doubt, be made, very faithfully, to repreſent and adumbrate thoſe of the *other*. This hath been executed with great art and diligence.

1. The *temple*, we obſerved, was erected on the banks of a river. This ſite was not only proper, for the reaſon already mentioned, but

alſo, for the further convenience of inſtituting *public games*, the ordinary attendants of the *conſecration* of temples. Theſe were generally, as in the caſe of the Olympic, and others, celebrated on the banks of rivers.

Illi victor ego, et Tyrio conſpectus in oſtro,
Centum quadrijugos agitabo ad flumina currus.
Cuncta mihi, Alpheum linquens lucoſque Molorchi,
Curſibus et crudo decernet Graecia caeſtu.

To ſee the propriety of the *figure* in this place, the reader needs only be reminded of the *book of games* in the Aeneïd, which was purpoſely introduced in honour of the emperor, and not, as is commonly thought, for a mere trial of ſkill between the poet and his maſter. The emperor was paſſionately fond of theſe ſports, and was even the author, or reſtorer, of *one* of them. It is not to be doubted, that he alludes alſo to the *quinquennial games*, actually celebrated, in honour of his temples, through many parts of the empire. And this the poet undertakes in the *civil* office of VICTOR.

2. What follows is in the *religious* office of PRIEST. For it is to be noted, that, in aſſuming this double character, which the decorum of the ſolemnities, here recounted, preſcribed, the poet has an eye to the *political* deſign of the Aeneïs, which was to do honour to Caeſar, in either

either capacity of a *civil* and *religious* perſonage; both being eſſential to the idea of the PERFECT LEGISLATOR, whoſe office and character (as an eminent critic hath lately ſhewn us [*d*], it was his purpoſe, in this immortal work, to adorn and recommend. The account of his *ſacerdotal functions* is delivered in theſe words:

Ipſe caput tonſae foliis ornatus olivae
Dona feram. Jam nunc ſolemnes ducere pompas
Ad delubra juvat, caeſoſque videre juvencos;
Vel ſcena ut verſis diſcedat frontibus, utque
Purpurea intexti tollant aulaea Britanni.

The imagery in this place cannot be underſtood, without reflecting on the cuſtomary form and diſpoſition of the pagan temples. DELUBRUM, or DELUBRA, for either *number* is uſed indifferently, denotes the ſhrine, or ſanctuary, wherein the ſtatue of the preſiding god was placed. This was in the center of the building. Exactly before the *delubrum*, and at no great diſtance from it, was the ALTAR. Further, the ſhrine, or *delubrum*, was incloſed and ſhut up on all ſides by *doors* of curious carved work, and ductile *veils*, embelliſhed by the rich embroidery of *flowers*, *animals*, or *human figures*. This being obſerved, the progreſs of the imagery before us will be this. The proceſſion

[*d*] DIV. LEG. vol. i. B. ii. S. 4.

ad

ad delubra, or ſhrine: the ſacrifice on the *altars*, erected before it: and, laſtly, the painted, or rather wrought *ſcenery* of the purple *veils*, incloſing the image, which were ornamented, and ſeemed to be ſuſtained, or held up by the figures of *inwoven Britons*. The meaning of all which is, that the poet would proceed to the celebration of Caeſar's praiſe in all the gradual, ſolemn preparation of poetic pomp: that he would render the moſt grateful *offerings* to his divinity in thoſe occaſional *epiſodes*, which he ſhould conſecrate to his more immediate honour: and, finally, that he would provide the richeſt texture of his fancy, for a covering to that admired *image* of his virtues, which was to make the ſovereign pride and glory of his poem. The choice of the *inwoven Britons*, for the ſupport of his *veil*, is well accounted for by thoſe who tell us, that Auguſtus was proud to have a number of theſe to ſerve about him in quality of ſlaves.

The ornaments of the DOORS of this *delubrum*, on which the ſculptor uſed to laviſh all the riches of his *art*, are next delineated.

In foribus pugnam ex auro ſolidoque elephanto
Gangaridum faciam, victoriſque arma Quirini;
Atque hic undantem belli, magnumque fluentem
Nilum, ac navali ſurgentes aere columnas.
Addam urbes Aſiae domitas, pulſumque Niphatem,
Fidentemque fugâ Parthum verſiſque ſagittis;

Et duo rapta manu diverſo ex hoſte trophaea,
Biſque triumphatas utroque ex littore gentes.

Here the covering of the *figure* is too thin to hide the *literal* meaning from the commoneſt reader, who ſees, that the ſeveral triumphs of Caeſar, here recorded in *ſculpture*, are thoſe, which the poet hath taken moſt pains to *finiſh*, and hath occaſionally inſerted, as it were, in *miniature*, in ſeveral places of his *poem*. Let him only turn to the prophetic ſpeech of Anchiſes's ſhade in the VIth, and to the deſcription of the ſhield in the VIIIth book.

Hitherto we have contemplated the decorations of the *ſhrine*, i. e. ſuch as bear a more direct and immediate reference to the honour of Caeſar. We are now preſented with a view of the remoter, ſurrounding ornaments of the temple. Theſe are the illuſtrious Trojan chiefs, whoſe ſtory was to furniſh the materials, or, more properly, to form the body and *caſe*, as it were, of his auguſt ſtructure. They are alſo connected with the idol deity of the place by the cloſeſt ties of relationſhip, the Julian family affecting to derive its pedigree from this proud original. The poet then, in his arrangement of theſe additional figures, with admirable judgment, completes and rounds the entire fiction.

Stabunt

Stabunt et Parii lapides, ſpirantia ſigna,
Aſſaraci proles, demiſſaeque ab Jove gentis
Nomina: Troſque parens et Trojae Cynthius auctor.

Nothing now remains but for *fame* to eternize the glories of what the great architect had, at the expence of ſo much art and labour, completed; which is predicted in the higheſt ſublime of ancient poetry, under the idea of ENVY, whom the poet perſonalizes, ſhuddering at the view of ſuch tranſcendent perfection; and taſting, beforehand, the pains of a remedileſs vexation, ſtrongly pictured in the image of the worſt, infernal tortures.

INVIDIA *infelix furias amnemque ſeverum*
Cocyti metuet, tortoſque Ixionis angues,
Immanemque rotam, et non exuperabile ſaxum.

Thus have I preſumed, but with a religious awe, to inſpect and declare the myſteries of this ideal temple. The attempt after all might have been cenſured, as prophane, if the great *Myſtagogue* himſelf, or ſomebody for him [e], had

[e] In theſe lines,

Mox tamen ardentes accingar dicere pugnas
Caeſaris, et nomen famâ tot ferre per annos,
Titboni primâ quot abeſt ab origine Caeſar.

Which I ſuſpect not to have been from the hand of Virgil. And,

I. On account of ſome *peculiarities in the expreſſion.*

1. *Accingar* is of frequent uſe in the beſt authors,

not given us the undoubted key to it. Under this encouragement, I could not withſtand the

to denote *a readineſs and reſolution to do any thing*; but as joined with an *infinitive mood*, *accingar dicere*, I do not remember to have ever ſeen it. It is often uſed by Virgil; but, if the ſeveral places be conſulted, it will always be found with an *accuſative* and *prepoſition*, expreſſed, or underſtood, as *magicas accingier artes*, or with an *accuſative* and *dative*, as *accingere ſe praedae*, or, laſtly, with an *ablative*, expreſſing the *inſtrument*, as *accingor ferro*. La Cerda, in his notes upon the place, ſeemed ſenſible of the objection, and therefore wrote, *Graeca locutio:* the common, but paltry, ſhift of learned critics, when they determine, at any rate, to ſupport an ancient reading.

2. *Ardentes pugnas*, *burning battles*, ſounds well enough to a modern ear; but I much doubt, if it would have paſſed in the times of Virgil. At leaſt, I recollect no ſuch expreſſion in all his works; *ardens* being conſtantly joined to a word, denoting a *ſubſtance* of apparent *light*, *heat*, or *flame*, to which the alluſion is eaſy, as *ardentes gladios*, *ardentes oculos*, *campos armis ſublimibus ardentes*, and, by an eaſy metaphor, *ardentes hoſtes*; but no where, that I can find, to ſo *abſtract* a notion, as that of *fight*. It ſeems to be to avoid this difficulty, that ſome have choſen to read *ardentis*, in the *genitive*, which yet Servius rejects as of no authority.

3. But the moſt glaring note of illegitimacy is in the line,

Tithoni primâ quot abeſt ab origine Caeſar.

It has puzzled all the commentators from old Servius

temptation of diſcloſing thus much of one of the nobleſt fictions of antiquity; and the rather,

down to the learned Mr. Martyn, to give any tolerable account of the poet's choice of *Tithonus*, from whom to derive the anceſtry of Auguſtus, rather than *Anchiſes*, or *Aſſaracus*, who were not only more famous, but in the *direct* line. The pretences of any, or all of them, are too frivolous to make it neceſſary to ſpend a thought about them. The inſtance ſtands ſingle in antiquity; much leſs is there any thing like it to be found in the Auguſtan poets.

II. But the *phraſeology* of theſe lines is the leaſt of my objection. Were it ever ſo accurate, there is, beſides, on the firſt view, a manifeſt abſurdity in the *ſubject-matter* of them. For would any writer, of but common ſkill in the art of compoſition, cloſe a long and elaborate allegory, the principal grace of which conſiſts in its very myſtery, with a cold and formal explanation of it? or would he pay ſo poor a compliment to his patron, as to ſuppoſe his ſagacity wanted the aſſiſtance of this additional triplet to lead him into the true meaning? Nothing can be more abhorrent from the uſual addreſs and artifice of Virgil's manner. Or,

III. Were the *ſubject-matter* itſelf paſſable, yet, how, in defiance of all the laws of *diſpoſition*, came it to be *found* in here? Let the reader turn to the paſſage, and he will ſoon perceive, that this could never be the *place* for it. The allegory being concluded, the poet returns to his ſubject, which is propoſed in the ſix following lines:

Interea Dryadum ſylvas, ſaltuſque ſequamur
Intactos, tua, Mæcenas, haud mollia juſſa;

as the propriety of allegoric compoſition, which made the diſtinguiſhed pride of ancient poetry,

Te ſine nil altum mens inchoat: en age ſegnes
Rumpe moras: vocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron,
Taygetique canes, domitrixque Epidaurus equorum,
Et vox aſſenſu nemorum ingeminata remugit.

Would now any one expect, that the poet, after having conducted the reader, thus reſpectfully, to the very threſhold of his ſubject, ſhould immediately run away again to the point from which he had ſet out, and this on ſo needleſs an errand, as the letting him into the ſecret of his allegory?

But this inſerted triplet agrees as ill with what *follows*, as with what *precedes* it. For how abrupt is the tranſition, and unlike the delicate connexion, ſo ſtudiouſly contrived by the Auguſtan poets, from

Tithoni primâ quot abeſt ab origine Caeſar,

to

Seu quis Olympiacae miratus praemia palmae, &c.

When, omit but theſe interpolated lines, and ſee how gracefully, and by how natural a ſucceſſion of ideas, the poet ſlides into the main of his ſubject:

Intereà Dryadum ſylvas ſaltuſque ſequamur
Intactos—
Te ſine nil—
Rumpe moras: vocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron
Taygetique canes, domitrixque Epidaurus EQUORUM,
Et vox aſſenſu nemorum ingeminata REMUGIT.
Seu quis Olympiacae miratus praemia palmae
Paſcit EQUOS; *ſeu quis fortes ad aratra* JUVENCOS.

On the whole, I have not the leaſt doubt, that the lines before us are the ſpurious offſpring of ſome *later*

ſeems

ſeems but little known or attended to by the *modern* profeſſors of this fine art.

17. NIL ORITURUM ALIAS, NIL ORTUM TALE FATENTES.] *Il n'eſt impoſſible*, ſays M. DE BALZAC, in that puffed, declamatory rhapſody, entitled, LE PRINCE, *de reſiſter au mouvement*

peet; if indeed the writer of them deſerve that name; for, whoever he was, he is ſo far from partaking of the original ſpirit of Virgil, that at moſt he appears to have been but a ſervile and paltry mimic of Ovid; from the opening of whoſe Metamorphoſes the deſign was clearly taken. The turn of the thought is evidently the ſame in both, and even the *expreſſion*. *Mutatas dicere formas* is echoed by *ardentes dicere pugnas: dicere fert animus*, is, by an affected improvement, *accingar dicere:* and *Titboni primâ ab origine* is almoſt literally the ſame as *primâque ab origine mundi*. For the *inſertion* of theſe lines in this place, I leave it to the curious to conjecture of it as they may; but in the mean time, muſt eſteem the office of the true *critic* to be ſo far reſembling that of the *poet* himſelf, as, within ſome proper limitations, to juſtify the *honeſt* liberty here taken.

Cum tabulis animum cenſoris ſumet honeſti;
Audebit quaecunque parum ſplendoris habebunt
Et ſine pondere erunt, et honore indigna ferentur,
VERBA MOVERE LOCO; QUAMVIS INVIVA RECEDANT,
ET VERSENTUR ADHUC INTRA PENETRALIA VESTAE. [2 Bp. ii. 110.

interieur,

interieur, qui me pouſſe. Je ne ſçaurois m'empecher de parler du ROY, *et de ſa vertu; de crier à tous les princes, que c'eſt l'exemple, qu'ils doivent ſuivre;* DE DEMANDER A TOUS LES PEUPLES, ET A TOUS LES AGES, S'ILS ONT JAMAIS RIEN VEU DE SEMBLABLE. This was ſpoken of a king of France, who, it will be owned, had his virtues. But they were the virtues of the *man*, and not of the *prince*. This, however, was a diſtinction, which the eloquent encomiaſt was not aware of, or, to ſpeak more truly, his buſineſs required him to overlook. For the whole elogy is worth peruſing, as it affords a ſtriking proof of the uniform genius of flattery, which, alike under all circumſtances, and indifferent to all characters, can hold the ſame language of the weakeſt, as the ableſt of princes, of LOUIS LE JUSTE, and CAESAR OCTAVIANUS AUGUSTUS.

23. SIC FAUTOR VETERUM, &c. to line 28.] The folly, here ſatirized, is common enough in all countries, and extends to all arts. It was juſt the ſame prepoſterous affectation of venerating antiquity, which put the connoiſſeurs in *painting*, under the emperors, on crying up the ſimple and rude ſketches of AGLAOPHON and POLYGNOTUS, above the exquiſite and finiſhed pictures of PARRHASIUS and ZEUXIS. The account is given by Quinctilian, who, in his

cenſure

cenſure of this abſurdity, points to the undoubted ſource of it. His words are theſe: "Primi quorum quidem opera non vetuſtatis "modò gratiâ viſenda ſunt, clari pictores fuiſſe "dicuntur Polygnotus et Aglaophon; quorum "ſimplex color tam ſui ſtudioſos adhuc habet, "ut illa propè rudia ac velut futurae mox artis "primordia, maximis, qui poſt eos extiterunt, "auctoribus praeferantur, PROPRIO QUODAM "INTELLIGENDI (ut mea fert opinio) AM-"BITU." [L. xii. c. 10.] The lover of painting muſt be the more ſurprized at this ſtrange *preference*, when he is told, that Aglaophon, at leaſt, had the uſe of only *one ſingle colour*; whereas Parrhaſius and Zeuxis, who are amongſt the *maximi auctores*, here glanced at, not only employed *different colours*, but were exceedingly eminent, the one of them for *correct drawing, and the delicacy of his outline*; the *other*, for his *invention* of that great ſecret of the *chiaro oſcuro*. "Poſt Zeuxis et Parrhaſius: quorum prior "LUMINUM UMBRARUMQUE INVENISSE RA-"TIONEM, ſecundus, EXAMINASSE SUBTILIUS "LINEAS DICITUR." [Ibid.]

28. SI, QUIA GRAIORUM SUNT ANTIQUISSIMA QUAEQUE SCRIPTA vel OPTIMA, &c.] The common interpretation of this place ſuppoſes the poet to admit *the moſt ancient of the Greek*

Greek writings to be the beſt. Which were even contrary to all experience and common ſenſe, and is directly confuted by the hiſtory of the Greek learning. What he allows is, the *ſuperiority* of the oldeſt Greek writings *extant*; which is a very different thing. The turn of his argument confines us to this ſenſe. For he would ſhew the folly of concluding the ſame of the *old Roman* writers, on their *firſt* rude attempts to copy the finiſhed models of Greece, as of the *old Greek writers* themſelves, who were furniſhed with the means of producing thoſe *models* by long diſcipline and cultivation. This appears, certainly, from what follows:

Venimus ad ſummum fortunae: pingimus atque
Pſallimus et luctamur Achivis doctius unctis.

The deſign of which hath been entirely overlooked. For it hath been taken only for a *general expreſſion* of falſehood and abſurdity, of juſt the ſame import as the proverbial line,

Nil intra eſt oleâ, nil extra eſt in nuce duri.

Whereas it was *deſignedly* pitched upon to convey a *particular illuſtration* of the very abſurdity in queſtion, and to ſhew the maintainers of it, from the nature of things, how ſenſeleſs their poſition was. It is to this purpoſe: "As well "it may be pretended, that we *Romans* ſurpaſs "the *Greeks* in the arts of *painting*, *muſic*, *and*

"*th*

" *the exerciſes of the palaeſtra*, which yet it is " confeſſed we do not, as that our *old* writers " ſurpaſs the *modern*. The abſurdity, in either " caſe, is the ſame. For, as the Greeks, who " had long devoted themſelves, with great and " continued application, to the practice of theſe " arts (which is the force of the epithet UNCTI, " here given them) muſt, for that reaſon, carry " the prize from the Romans, who have taken " very little pains about them; ſo, the modern " Romans, who have for a long time been " ſtudying the *arts of poetry and compoſition*, muſt " needs excel the old Roman writers, who had " little or no acquaintance with thoſe arts, and " had been trained, by no previous diſcipline, " to the exerciſe of them."

The conciſeneſs of the expreſſion made it neceſſary to open the poet's ſenſe at large. We now ſee that his intention, in theſe two lines, was to expoſe, in the way of *argumentative illuſtration*, the ground of that abſurdity, which the preceding verſes had repreſented as, at firſt ſight, ſo ſhocking to *common ſenſe*.

33. UNCTIS.] This is by no means a general, unmeaning epithet: but is beautifully choſen to expreſs the unwearied *aſſiduity* of the Greek artiſts. For, the practice of *anointing* being eſſential to their agoniſtic trials, the poet

elegantly puts the attending *circumſtance* for the *thing* itſelf. And ſo, in ſpeaking of them, as UNCTI, he does the ſame, as if he had called them "the induſtrious, or *exerciſing* Greeks;" which was the very idea his argument required him to ſuggeſt to us.

43.—HONESTE.] Expreſſing the *credit* ſuch a piece was held in, as had the fortune to be ranked *inter veteres*, agreeably to what he ſaid above—PERFECTOS *vetereſque*, line 37—and—*vetus atque* PROBUS, line 39: which affords a freſh preſumption in favour of Dr. Bentley's conjecture on line 41, where, inſtead of *veteres poetas*, he would read,

Inter quos referendus erit? vetereſne PROBOSQUE,
An quos, &c.

54. ADEO SANCTUM EST VETUS OMNE POEMA.] The reader is not to ſuppoſe, that Horace, in this ridicule of the fooliſh adorers of antiquity, intended any contempt of the old Roman poets; who, as the old writers in every country, abound in ſtrong ſenſe, vigorous expreſſion, and the trueſt repreſentation of life and manners. His quarrel is only with the critic:

Qui redit in faſtos et virtutem aeſtimat annis.

An affectation, which for its *folly*, if it had not

too

too apparently ſprung from a worſe principle, deſerved to be laughed at.

For the reſt, he every where diſcovers a candid and juſt eſteem of their earlier writers; as may be ſeen from many places in this very epiſtle; but more eſpecially from that ſevere cenſure in 1 S. x. 17. (which hath more of acrimony in it than he uſually allows to his ſatire) when, in ſpeaking of the writers of the old comedy, he adds,

Quos neque pulcher
Hermogenes unquam legit, neque ſimius iſte
Nil praeter Calvum et doctus cantare Catullum.

With all his zeal for correct writing, he was not, we ſee, of the humour of that delicate ſort, who are for burning their old poets; and, to be well with women and court-critics, confine their reading and admiration to the innocent ſing-ſong of ſome ſoft and faſhionable rhymer, whoſe utter inſipidity is a thouſand times more inſufferable than any barbariſm.

56. PACUVIUS DOCTI FAMAM SENIS, ACCIUS ALTI.] The epithet *docti*, here applied to the tragic poet, *Pacuvius*, is, I believe, ſometimes miſunderſtood, though the oppoſition to *alti* clearly determines the ſenſe. For, as this laſt word expreſſes the *ſublime* of ſentiment and expreſſion, which comes from *nature*, ſo the former word muſt needs be interpreted of that

exactneſs

exactneſs in both, or at leaſt of that *ſkill* in the conduct of the ſcene (the proper *learning* of a dramatic poet) which is the reſult of *art*.

The Latin word *doctus* is indeed ſomewhat ambiguous: but we are chiefly miſled by the Engliſh word, *learned*, by which we tranſlate it, and by which, in general uſe, is meant, rather extenſive reading, and what we call *erudition*, than a profound ſkill in the rules and principles of any art. But this laſt is frequently the ſenſe of the Latin term *doctus*, as we may ſee from its application, in the beſt claſſic writers, to other, beſides the literary profeſſions. Thus, to omit other inſtances, we find it applied very often in Horace himſelf. It is applied to a *ſinging-girl*—*doctae* pſallere Chiae—in one of his Odes, l. iv. 13. It is applied to ſeveral *mechanic arts* in this epiſtle—"*doctius* "Achivis pingimus atque pſallimus et luctamur:" It is even applied, *abſolutely*, to the player Roſcius—*doctus* Roſcius, in line 82, where his ſkill in *acting* could only be intended by it. It is, alſo, in this ſenſe, that he calls his imitator, *doctus*, i. e. ſkilled and knowing in his art, A. P. line 319. Nay, it is preciſely in this ſenſe that Quinctilian uſes the word, when he characterizes this very Pacuvius—*Pacuvium videri* doctiorem, *qui eſſe docti affectant, volunt* [l. x. c. 1.] i. e. *they, who affect to be thought knowing*

ing in the rules of dramatic writing, give this praiſe to Pacuvius. The expreſſion is ſo put, as if Quinctilian intended a cenſure of theſe critics; becauſe this pretence to dramatic art, and the ſtrict imitation of the Greek poets, was grown, in his time, and long before it, into a degree of pedantry and *affectation*; no other merit, but this of *docti*, being of any ſignificancy, in their account. There is no reaſon to think that Quinctilian meant to inſinuate the poet's want of this merit, or his own contempt of it: though he might think, and with reaſon, that too much ſtreſs had been laid upon it by ſome men.

It is in the ſame manner that one of our own poets has been characterized; and the application of this term to him will ſhew the force of it, ſtill more clearly.

In Mr. Pope's fine imitation of this epiſtle, are theſe lines—

In all debates, where critics bear a part,
Not one but nods and talks of Jonſon's *art*—

One ſees, then, how Mr. Pope underſtood the *docti*, of Horace. But our Milton applies the word *learned* itſelf, and in the Latin ſenſe of it, to Jonſon—

When Jonſon's *learned* ſock is on—

For what is this *learning?* Indiſputably, his *dramatic learning*, his ſkill in the ſcene, and his

obſervance of the ancient rules and practice. For, though Jonſon was indeed *learned*, in every ſenſe; it is the learning of his profeſſion, as a comic artiſt, for which he is here celebrated.

The Latin ſubſtantive, *doctrina*, is uſed with the ſame latitude, as the adjective, *doctus*. It ſometimes ſignifies the *peculiar ſort* of learning, under conſideration; though ſometimes again it ſignifies *learning*, or erudition, at large. It is uſed in the former ſenſe by Cicero, when he obſerves of the ſatires of Lucilius, that they were remarkable for their wit and pleaſantry, not for their *learning*—*doctrina* mediocris. So that there is no contradiction in this judgment, as is commonly thought, to that of Quinctilian, who declares roundly—*eruditio* in eo mira—For, though *doctrina* and *eruditio* be ſometimes convertible terms, they are not ſo here. The *learning* Cicero ſpeaks of in Lucilius, as being but *moderate*, is his learning, or ſkill, in the art of writing and compoſition.—That this was the whole purport of Cicero's obſervation, any one may ſee by turning to the place where it occurs, in the proeme to his firſt book DE FINIBUS.

59. VINCERE CAECILIUS GRAVITATE, TERENTIUS ARTE.] It ſhould be obſerved, that the

the judgment, here paſſed [from line 55 to 60] on the moſt celebrated Roman writers, being only a repreſentation of the *popular* opinion, not of the poet's *own*, the commendations given to them are deſerved, or otherwiſe, juſt as it chances.

Interdum vulgus rectum videt, eſt ubi peccat.

To give an inſtance of this in the line before us.

A critic of unqueſtioned authority acquaints us, wherein the *real diſtinct merit* of theſe two dramatic writers conſiſts. "In ARGUMENTIS, "Caecilius palmam poſcit; in ETHESIN, TE-"RENTIUS." [Varro.] Now by *gravitate*, as applied to Caecilius, we may properly enough underſtand the *grave and affecting caſt* of his comedy; which is further confirmed by what the ſame critic elſewhere obſerves of him: "PATHE "Trabea, Attilius, et CAECILIUS facile move-"runt." But Terence's characteriſtic of *painting the manners*, which is, plainly, the right interpretation of Varro's ETHESIN, is not ſo ſignificantly expreſſed by the attribute *arte*, here given to him. The word indeed is of large and general import, and may admit of various ſenſes; but, being here applied to a *dramatic* writer, it moſt naturally and properly denotes the *peculiar* art of his profeſſion, that is, *the artificial contexture of the plot*. And this, I doubt not, was the

very praiſe, the town-critics of Horace's time intended to beſtow on this poet. The matter is eaſily explained.

The ſimplicity, and exact unity of the plots in the Greek comedies would be, of courſe, unintereſting to a people, not thoroughly inſtructed in the genuine beauties of the drama. They had too thin a contexture to ſatisfy the groſs and lumpiſh taſte of a Roman auditory. The Latin poets, therefore, bethought themſelves of combining two ſtories into one. And this, which is what we call the *double plot*, affording the opportunity of more incidents, and a greater variety of *action*, was perfectly ſuited to their apprehenſions. But, of all the Latin comedians, *Terence* appears to have practiſed this ſecret moſt aſſiduouſly: at leaſt, as may be concluded from what remains of them. *Plautus* hath very frequently *ſingle plots*, which he was enabled to ſupport by, what was natural to him, a force of buffoon pleaſantry. *Terence*, whoſe genius lay another way, or whoſe taſte was abhorrent from ſuch ribaldry, had recourſe to the other expedient of *double plots*. And this, I ſuppoſe, is what gained him the popular reputation of being the moſt *artificial* writer for the ſtage. The HECYRA is the only one of his comedies, of the true ancient caſt. And we know how it came off in the repreſentation. That ill-ſucceſs, and the ſimplicity

city of its conduct have continued to draw upon it the same unfavourable treatment from the critics, to this day; who constantly speak of it, as much inferior to the rest; whereas, for the genuine beauty of dramatic design, and the observance, after the ancient Greek manner, of the nice dependency and coherence of the *fable* throughout, it is, indisputably, to every reader of true taste, the most masterly and exquisite of the whole collection.

63. INTERDUM VOLGUS RECTUM VIDET: EST UBI PECCAT.] The capricious levity of *popular opinion* hath been noted even to a proverb. And yet it is this, which, after all, *fixes* the fate of authors. This seemingly odd phænomenon I would thus account for.

What is usually complimented with the high and reverend appellation of *public judgment* is, in any single instance, but the repetition or echo, for the most part eagerly catched, and strongly reverberated on all sides, of a few leading voices, which have happened to gain the confidence, and so direct the *cry*, of the public. But (as, in fact, it too often falls out) this prerogative of the *few* may be abused to the prejudice of the *many*. The partialities of friendship, the fashionableness of the writer, his compliance with the reigning taste, the lucky concurrence of time

and opportunity, the cabal of a party, nay, the very freaks of whim and caprice; theſe, or any of them, as occaſion ſerves, can ſupport the dulleſt, as the oppoſite diſadvantages can depreſs the nobleſt, performance; and give a currency or neglect to *either*, far beyond what the genuine character of each demands. Hence the *public voice*, which is but the aggregate of theſe corrupt judgments, infinitely multiplied, is, with the wiſe, at ſuch a juncture, deſervedly of little eſteem. Yet, in a ſucceſſion of ſuch *judgments*, delivered at different times, and by different ſets or juntos of theſe ſovereign arbiters of the fate of authors, the public opinion naturally gets clear of theſe accidental corruptions. Every freſh ſucceſſion ſhakes off ſome; till, by degrees, the work is ſeen in its proper form, unſupported of every other recommendation, than what its native inherent excellence beſtows upon it. Then, and not till then, *the voice of the people* becomes ſacred; after which it ſoon advances into *divinity*, before which all ages muſt fall down and worſhip. For now reaſon alone, without her corrupt aſſeſſors, takes the chair. And her ſentence, when once promulgated, and authorized by the general voice, fixes the unalterable doom of authors. ΟΛΩΣ ΚΑΛΑ ΝΟΜΙΖΕ ΤΥΧΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΛΗΘΙΝΑ, ΤΑ ΔΙΑΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΑΡΕΣΚΟΝΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΙΝ. [Longinus, § vii.]

§ vii.] And the reaſon follows, agreeably to the account here given. Ὅταν γὰρ τοῖς ἀπὸ διαφόρων ΕΠΙΤΗΔΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ, ΒΙΩΝ, ΖΗΛΩΝ, ΗΛΙΚΙΩΝ, λόγων, ἔν τι καὶ ταὐτὸν ἅμα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἅπασι δοκῇ, τοθ' ἡ ἐξ ἀσυμφώνων ὡς κρίσις καὶ συγκατάθεσις τὴν ἐπὶ τῷ θαυμαζομένῳ ΠΙΣΤΙΝ ΙΣΧΥΡΑΝ ΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΜΦΙΛΕΚΤΟΝ. [Ibid.]

This is the true account of *popular fame*, which, while it well explains the ground of the poet's aphoriſm, ſuggeſts an obvious remark, but very mortifying to every candidate of literary glory. It is, that, whether he ſucceeds in his endeavours after public applauſe, or not, *fame* is equally out of his reach, and, as the moral poet teaches, *a thing beyond him, before his death*, on either ſuppoſition. For at the very time, that this bewitching muſic is ſounding in his ears, he can never be ſure, if, inſtead of the divine conſentient harmony of a juſt praiſe, it be not only the diſcordant din and clamour of ignorance or prepoſſeſſion.

If there be any exception to this melancholy truth, it muſt be in the caſe of ſome uncommon genius, whoſe ſuperior power breaks through all impediments in his road to fame, and forces applauſe even from thoſe very prejudices, that would obſtruct his career to it.

It was the rare felicity of the poet, juſt mentioned, to receive, in his life-time, this ſure and pleaſing augury of immortality.

81. INGENIIS NON ILLE FAVET, &c.] MALHERBE was to the French, pretty much what HORACE had been to the Latin, poetry. Theſe great writers had, each of them, reſcued the lyric muſe of their country out of the rude, ungracious hands of their old poets. And, as their talents of a *good ear*, *elegant judgment*, and *correct expreſſion*, were the ſame, they preſented her to the public in all the air and grace, and yet *ſeverity*, of beauty, of which her form was ſuſceptible. Their merits and pretenſions being thus far reſembling, the reader may not be incurious to know the fate and fortune of *each*. *Horace* hath very frankly told us, what befel himſelf from the malevolent and low paſſions of his countrymen. *Malherbe* did not come off, with the wits and critics of his time, much better; as we learn from a learned perſon, who hath very warmly recommended his writings to the public. Speaking of the envy, which purſued him in his *proſe-works*; but, ſays he, "comme "il faiſoit une particuliere profeſſion de la *poeſie*, "c'eſt en cette qualité qu'il a de plus ſeveres "cenſeurs, et receu des injuſtices plus ſignalées. "Mais il me ſemble que je fermerai la bouche "à ceux,

" à ceux, qui le blament, quand je leur aurai " monſtré, que ſa façon d'eſcrire eſt excellente, " quoiqu'elle s'eloigne un peu de celle des NOS " ANCIENS POETES, QU'ILS LOUENT PLUSTOT " PAR UN DEGOUST DES CHOSES PRESENTES, " QUE PAR LES SENTIMENTS D'UNE VERI- " TABLE ESTIME." [DISC. DE M. GODEAU SUR LES OEUVRES DE M. MALHERBE.]

97. SUSPENDIT MENTEM VULTUMQUE.] The expreſſion hath great elegance, and is not liable to the imputation of *harſh, or improper conſtruction.* For *ſuſpendit* is not taken, with regard either to *mentem* or *vultum*, in its *literal*, but *figurative*, ſignification; and, thus, it becomes, in one and the *ſame* ſenſe, applicable to *both.*

Otherwiſe, this way of coupling *two ſubſtantives* to a *verb*, which does not, in ſtrict grammatical uſage, *govern* both; or, if it doth, muſt needs be conſtrued in different ſenſes; hath given juſt offence to the beſt critics.

Mr. Pope cenſures a paſſage of this kind, in the *Iliad*, with ſeverity; and thinks *the taſte of the antients was, in general, too good for thoſe fooleries* [*f*].

Mr. Addiſon is perfectly of the ſame mind, as appears from his criticiſm on that line in

[*f*] B. ix. 641.

Ovid,

Ovid, *Conſiliis, non curribus utere noſtris.* "This "way of joining, ſays he, two ſuch different "ideas as chariot and counſel to the ſame verb, "is mightily uſed by *Ovid*; but is a very low "kind of wit, and has always in it a mixture of "*pun*; becauſe the verb muſt be taken in a dif- "ferent ſenſe, when it is joined with one of the "things, from what it has in conjunction with "the other. Thus, in the end of this ſtory, he "tells you, that Jupiter flung a thunderbolt at "Phaëton: *pariterque animaque rotiſque expulit* "*aurigam:* where he makes a forced piece of "*Latin (animâ expulit aurigam)* that he may "couple the ſoul and the wheels to the ſame "verb [*g*]."

Theſe, the reader will think, are pretty good authorities. For, in matters of *taſte*, I know of none, that more deſerve to be regarded. The *mere verbal critic*, one would think, ſhould be cautious, how he oppoſed himſelf to them. And yet a very learned Dutchman, who has taken great pains in *elucidating* an old Greek love-ſtory, which, with its more paſſionate admirers, may, perhaps, paſs for the MARIANNE of antiquity, hath not ſcrupled to cenſure this deciſion of theirs very ſharply [*h*].

[*g*] *Notes on the ſtory of Phaëton*, line 23.

[*h*] JACOBI PHILIPPI D'ORVILLE *Animadverſiones in* CHARIT. APHROD. lib. iv. c. 4.

Having

Having tranſcribed the cenſure of Mr. *Pope*, who, indeed ſomewhat too haſtily, ſuſpects the line in Homer for an interpolation, our critic faſtens upon him directly. EN COR ZENODOTI, EN JECUR CRATETIS! But foul language and fair criticiſm are different things; and what he offers of the *latter* rather accounts for than juſtifies the *former*. All he ſays on the ſubject, is in the good old way of *authorities*, which he diligently rakes together out of every corner of Greek and Roman antiquity. From all theſe he concludes, as he thinks, irreſiſtibly, not that the paſſage in queſtion *might* be *genuine* (for *that* few would diſpute with him) but that the kind of expreſſion itſelf is a *real beauty*. *Bona elocutio eſt: honeſta figura.* Though, to the praiſe of his diſcretion be it remembered, he does not even venture on this aſſertion, without his uſual ſupport of *precedent*. And, for want of a better, he takes up with old *Servius*. For ſo, it ſeems, this grammarian hath declared himſelf, with reſpect to ſome expreſſions of the ſame kind in *Virgil*.

But let him make the beſt of his authorities. And, when he has done that, I ſhall take the liberty to aſſure him, that the perſons, he contends againſt, do not think themſelves in the leaſt concerned with them. For, though he believes it an undeniable maxim, *Critici non eſſe inquirere, utrum recte auter quid ſcripſerit, ſed an*

ex-

omnino ſic ſcripſerit [*i*]: yet, in the caſe before us, he muſt not be ſurprized, if others do not ſo conceive of it.

Indeed, where the critic would defend the *authenticity* of a word or expreſſion, the way of *precedent* is, doubtleſs, the very beſt, that common ſenſe allows to be taken. For the evidence of *fact*, at once, bears down all ſuſpicion of *corruption* or *interpolation*. Again; if the *elegance* of ſingle words (or of entire phraſes, where the ſuſpicion turns on the *oddity or uncommoneſs of the conſtruction*, only) be the matter in diſpute, full and preciſe authorities muſt decide it. For *elegance*, here, means nothing elſe but the practice of the beſt writers. And thus far I would join iſſue with the learned cenſurer; and ſhould think he did well in preſcribing this rule to himſelf in the correction of *approved ancient authors*.

But what have theſe caſes to do with the point in queſtion? The objection is made, not to *words*, which alone are capable of being juſtified by authority, but to *things*, which muſt ever be what they are, in ſpite of it. This mode of writing is ſhewn to be abundantly defective, for reaſons taken from *the nature of our ideas, and the end and genius of the nobler forms of compoſition*. And what is it to tell us, that great writers have overlooked or neglected them?

[*i*] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 325.

1. In our cuſtomary train of *thinking*, the mind is carried along, *in ſucceſſion*, from *one* clear and diſtinct idea to *another*. Or, if the attention be *at once* employed on *two ſenſes*, there is ever ſuch a cloſe and near analogy betwixt them, that the perceptive faculty, eaſily, and almoſt inſtantaneouſly, paſſing from the one to the other, is not divided in its regards betwixt them, but even ſeems to itſelf to conſider them, as *one*: as is the caſe with *metaphor*; and, univerſally, with all the juſt forms of *alluſion*. The union between the *literal* and *figurative* ſenſe is ſo ſtrict, that they run together in the imagination; and the effect of the *figure* is only to let in freſh light and luſtre on the *literal* meaning. But now, when *two different*, *unconnected ideas* are obtruded at the ſame time upon us, the mind ſuffers a kind of violence and diſtraction, and is thereby put out of that natural ſtate, in which it ſo much delights. To take the learned writer's inſtance from Polybius: ΕΛΠΙΔΑ καὶ ΚΕΙΡΑ ΠΡΟΣΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙΝ. How different is the idea of *collecting forces*, and of that *act* of the mind, which we call *taking courage!* Theſe two *perceptions* are not only diſtinct from each other, but totally unconnected by any *natural* bond of relationſhip betwixt them. And yet the word ΠΡΟΣΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙΝ muſt be ſeen in this double

view,

view, before we can take the full meaning of the hiſtorian.

2. This conjunction of *unrelated* ideas, by the means of a *common term*, agrees as ill to the *end and genius of the writer's compoſition*, as *the natural bent and conſtitution of the mind*. For the queſtion is only about the *greater poetry*, which addreſſes itſelf to the PASSIONS, or IMAGINATION. And, in either caſe, this play of words, which Mr. Pope condemns, muſt be highly out of ſeaſon.

When we are neceſſitated, as it were, to look different ways, and actually to contemplate two unconnected ſignifications of the ſame word, before we can thoroughly comprehend its purpoſe; the mind is more amuſed by this fanciful conjunction of ideas, than is conſiſtent with the artleſs, undeſigning ſimplicity of *paſſion*. It diſturbs and interrupts the flow of *affection*, by preſenting this diſparted image to the *fancy*. Again; where *fancy* itſelf is ſolely addreſſed, as in the *nobler deſcriptive ſpecies*, this arbitrary aſſemblage of ideas is not leſs improper. For the poet's buſineſs is now, to aſtoniſh or entertain the mind with a ſucceſſion of *great* or *beautiful* images. And the intervention of this juggler's trick diverts the thought from contemplating its proper ſcenery. We ſhould be admiring ſome glorious repreſentation of *nature*, and are ſtopped, on a ſudden, to obſerve the writer's *art*, whoſe

whoſe ingenuity can fetch, out of one word, two ſuch foreign and diſcrepant meanings.

In the lighter forms of poetry indeed, and more eſpecially in the *burleſque epic*, this affectation has its *place*; as in that line of Mr. Pope, quoted by this critic;

ſometimes counſel takes, *and ſometimes tea.*

For, 1. The writer's intention is here, not to *affect the paſſions*, or *tranſport the fancy*, but ſolely to *divert and amuſe*. And to ſuch *end* this ſpecies of trifling is very appoſite. 2. The *manner*, which the burleſque epic takes to divert, is by confounding *great things with ſmall*. A *mode of ſpeech* then, which favours ſuch *confuſion*, is directly to its purpoſe. 3. This poem is, by its nature, *ſatirical*, and, like the *old comedy*, delights in expoſing the faults and vices of *compoſition*. So that the *expreſſion* is here properly employed (and this was, perhaps, the *firſt* view of the writer) to ridicule the uſe of it in *grave works*. If M. *D'Orville* then could ſeriouſly deſign to confute Mr. Pope's criticiſm by his own practice in that line of the *Rape of the Lock*, he has only ſhewn, that he does not, in the leaſt, comprehend the real genius of this poem. But to return:

There is, as appears to me, but one caſe, in which this *double ſenſe* of words can be admitted

in

in the more ſolemn forms of poetry. It is, when, beſides the plain literal meaning, which the context demands, the mind is carried forward to ſome more illuſtrious and important object. We have an inſtance in the famous line of Virgil,

Attollens humeris famamque et fata nepotum.

But this is ſo far from contradicting, that it furthers the writer's proper intention. We are not called off from the *ſubject-matter* to the obſervation of a *conceit*, but to the admiration of *kindred* ſublime conceptions. For even here, it is to be obſerved, there is always required ſome previous dependency and relationſhip, though not extremely obvious, in the natures of the things themſelves, whereon to ground and juſtify the analogy. Otherwiſe, the intention of the *double ſenſe* is perfectly inexcuſable.

But the inſtance from Virgil, as we have ſeen it explained (and for the firſt time) by a great critic [*i*], is ſo curious, that I ſhall be allowed to enlarge a little upon it: and the rather, as Virgil's practice in this inſtance will let us into the true ſecret of conducting theſe *double ſenſes*.

The comment of *Servius* on this line is remarkable: "Hunc verſum notant critici, "quaſi ſuperfluè et inutiliter additum, nec con-

[*i*] D. L. vol. ii. p. 644.

"venientem

" venientem *gravitati* ejus, namque eſt magis " *neotericus.*" Mr. Addiſon conceived of it in the ſame manner, when he ſaid, " *This was* " *the only witty line in the Æneis*;" meaning ſuch a line as *Ovid* would have written. We ſee the opinion which theſe Critics entertained of the *double ſenſe*, in *general*, in the greater Poetry. They eſteemed it a wanton play of fancy, miſbecoming the dignity of the writer's work, and the gravity of his character. They took it, in ſhort, for a mere *modern* flouriſh, totally different from the pure unaffected manner of genuine antiquity. And thus far they unqueſtionably judged right. Their defect was in not ſeeing that the *uſe* of it, as here employed by the Poet, was an exception to the *general rule*. But to have ſeen this was not, perhaps, to be expected even from theſe Critics.

However, from this want of penetration aroſe a difficulty in determining whether to read, *Facta* or *Fata* Nepotum. And, as we now underſtand that *Servius* and his Critics were utter ſtrangers to Virgil's noble idea, it is no wonder they could not reſolve it. But the *latter* is the Poet's own word. He conſidered this ſhield of celeſtial make as a kind of Palladium, like the ANCILE, which fell from Heaven, and uſed to be carried in proceſſion on the ſhoulders of the SALII. " Quid de ſcutis, ſays Lactantius, jam

" vetuſtate putridis dicam? Quæ cum portant, " *Deos ipſos ſe geſtare* HUMERIS SUIS *arbitran-* " *tur.*" [Div. Inſt. l. i. c. 21.]

Virgil, in a fine flight of imagination, alludes to this venerable ceremony, comparing, as it were, the ſhield of his Hero to the ſacred ANCILE; and in conformity to the practice in that ſacred proceſſion repreſents his Hero in the prieſtly office of Religion,

Attollens HUMERO *famamque et* FATA *Nepotum.*

This idea then of the ſacred ſhield, the guard and glory of Rome, and on which, in this advanced ſituation, depended the fame and fortune of his country, the poet, with extreme elegance and ſublimity, transfers to the ſhield which guarded their great progenitor, while he was laying the firſt foundations of the Roman Empire.

But to return to the ſubject before us. What has been ſaid of the impropriety of *double ſenſes*, holds of *the conſtruction of a ſingle term in two ſenſes*, even though its authorized uſage may equally admit *both*. So that I cannot be of a mind with the learned critic's *wiſe men* [*k*]; *who acknowledge an extreme elegance in this form,*

[*k*] At inſpiciamus porrò, quid alii, *quibus correctius ſapit*, de hoc loquendi modo CENSUERINT. Agnoſcunt enim, etc. p. 299.

when

when the governing verb equally corresponds to the two ſubſtantives. But when it properly can be applied but to *one* of them, and with ſome force and ſtraining only to the *ſecond*, as commonly happens with the application of *one verb to two ſubſtantives*, it then degenerates, as Mr. Addiſon obſerves, into a mere *quibble*, and is utterly incompatible with the graver forms of compoſition. And for this we have the concurrent authority of the *cordati* themſelves, who readily admit, *duram admodum et κακοζηλωτικὴν fieri orationem, ſi verbum hoc ab alterutro abhorreat* [*l*]. Without ſoftening matters, beſides the former abſurdity of *a ſecond ſenſe*, we are now indebted to a forced and barbarous conſtruction for *any* ſecond ſenſe *at all*.

But ſurely this venerable bench of critics, to whom our cenſurer thinks fit to make his ſolemn appeal, were not aware of the imprudence of this conceſſion. For why, if one may preſume to aſk, is the *latter* uſe of this *figure* condemned, but for reaſons, which ſhew the manifeſt abſurdity of the thing, however countenanced by authorities? And is not this the caſe of the *former?* Or, is the tranſgreſſion of the ſtanding rules of *good ſenſe*, in the judgment of theſe *cenſors*, a more pardonable crime in a writer, than of *common uſage or grammar?*

[*l*] Ibid.

After all, ſince he lays ſo great ſtreſs on his *authorities*, it may not be amiſs to conſider the proper force of them.

The form of ſpeaking under conſideration has been cenſured as a *trifling, affected witticiſm*. This *cenſure* he hopes entirely to elude, by ſhewing it was in uſe, more eſpecially among two ſorts of perſons, the leaſt likely to be infected with *wrong taſte*, the *oldeſt*, that is to ſay, the *ſimpleſt*; and the moſt *refined* writers. In ſhort, he thinks to ſtop all mouths, by alledging inſtances from *Homer* and *Virgil*.

But what if Homer and Virgil in the few examples of this kind to be met with in their writings have *erred?* And, which is more, what if that very *ſimplicity* on the one hand, and *refinement* on the other, which he builds ſo much upon, can be ſhewn to be the *natural* and almoſt neceſſary *occaſions* of their falling into ſuch *errors?* This, I am perſuaded, was the truth of the caſe. For,

1. In the *ſimpler ages of learning*, when, as yet, compoſition is not turned into an *art*, but every writer, eſpecially of vehement and impetuous genius, is contented to put down his *firſt thoughts*, and, for their *expreſſion*, takes up with the moſt obvious words and phraſes that preſent themſelves to him, this improper conſtruction will not be unfrequent. For the writer,

writer, who is not knowing enough to take offence at theſe niceties, having an immediate occaſion to expreſs *two things*, and finding *one word*, which, in common uſage, at leaſt with a little ſtraining, extends to *both*, he looks no further, but, as ſuſpecting no fault, employs it without ſcruple. And I am the more confirmed in this account, from obſerving, that ſometimes, where the governing *verb* cannot be made to bear this double ſenſe, and yet the meaning of the writer is clear enough from the context, the proper word is altogether omitted. Of this kind are ſeveral of the *modes of ſpeaking*, alledged by the writer as inſtances of the *double ſenſe*. As in that of Sophocles [*m*], where Electra, giving orders to Chryſothemis, about the diſpoſal of the *libations*, deſtined for the tomb of her father, delivers herſelf thus,

ΑΛΛ' ἢ ΠΗΝΟΔΙΣΕΙΝ, ἢ [illegible] ΚΟΝΕΙ
ΚΡΥΨΟΝ κτλ.

The writer's firſt intention was to look out for ſome ſuch *verb*, as would equally correſpond to πηδᾶν and χόειν· but this not occurring, he ſets down one, that only agrees to the laſt, and leaves the other to be underſtood, or ſupplied by the reader; as it eaſily might, the ſcope of the place neceſſarily directing him to it. It cannot

[*m*] Line 437.

be ſuppoſed, that Sophocles deſigned to ſay, κρύψον ᾠοαῖς. There is no affinity of *ſenſe* or *ſound* to lead him to ſuch conſtruction. Again; in that verſe of Homer [*n*],

Ἵπποι ἀερσίποδες, ἧ ῥοικίλα ΤΕΥΧΕ' ΕΚΕΙΤΟ,

the poet never meant to ſay ἵπποι ἔκειντο, but neglectingly left it thus, as truſting the nature of the thing would inſtruct the reader to ſupply ἔϛασαν, or ſome ſuch word expreſſive of the *poſture* required.

Nay, writers of more exactneſs than theſe ſimple Greek poets have occaſionally overlooked ſuch inaccuracies: as Cicero [*o*], who, when more intent on his *argument* than *expreſſion*, lets fall this impropriety, *Nec vero* SUPRA TERRAM, *ſed etiam* IN INTIMIS EJUS TENEBRIS *plurimarum rerum* LATET *utilitas*. It is plain, the writer, conceiving *extat*, *patet*, or ſome ſuch word, to be neceſſarily ſuggeſted by the tenor of his ſentence, never troubled himſelf to go back to inſert it. Yet theſe are brought as examples of the *double application of ſingle words*. The truth is, they are examples of *indiligence* in the writers, and as ſuch, may ſhew us, how eaſily they might fall, for the ſame reaſon, into the impropriety of *double ſenſes*. In thoſe of this claſs

[*n*] Iliad, Γ. 327. [*o*] N. D. ii. 64.

then

then the impropriety, complained of, is the effect of mere *inattention or careleſſneſs*.

2. On the other hand, when this negligent ſimplicity of *thinking and ſpeaking* gives way to the utmoſt poliſh and refinement in *both*, we are then to expect it, for the contrary reaſon. For the more obvious and natural forms of writing being, now, grown common, are held inſipid, and the public taſte demands to be gratified by the ſeaſoning of a more ſtudied and artificial expreſſion. It is not enough to *pleaſe*; the writer muſt find means to *ſtrike* and *ſurprize*. And hence the *antitheſis*, the *remote alluſion*, and every other mode of *affected eloquence*. But of theſe the *firſt* that prevails, is the application of the *double ſenſe*. For, the general uſe juſtifying it, it eaſily paſſes with the reader and writer too, for *natural* expreſſion; and yet as ſplitting the attention ſuddenly, and at once, on two different views, carries with it all the novelty and ſurprize, that are wanted. When the public taſte is not, yet, far gone in this refinement, and the writer hath himſelf the trueſt taſte (which was VIRGIL's caſe), ſuch affectations will not be very common; or, when they do occur, will, for the moſt part, be agreeably ſoftened. As in the inſtance of *retroque pedem cum voce repreſſit*; where, by making *voce* immediately dependent on the *preposition*, and re-

motely on the *verb*, he ſoftens the harſhneſs of the expreſſion, which ſeems much more tolerable in this form, than if he had put it, *pedem vocemque repreſſit*. So again in the line,

Crudeles aras trajectaque pectora ferro
Nudavit,

the incongruity of *the two ſenſes* in *nudavit*, is the leſs perceived from its *metaphorical application* to *one* of them.

But the deſire of *pleaſing continually*, which, in the circumſtances ſuppoſed, inſenſibly grows into a *habit*, muſt, of neceſſity, betray writers of leſs taſte and exactneſs into the frequent commiſſion of this fault. Which, as Mr. Addiſon takes notice, was remarkably the caſe with OVID.

The purpoſe of all this is to ſhew, that the uſe of this *form of ſpeaking* aroſe from *negligence*, or *affectation*, never from *judgment*. And ſuch being the obvious, and, it is preſumed, true account of the matter, the learned *animadvertor* on CHARITON is left, as I ſaid, to make the beſt of his *authorities*; or, even to enlarge his liſt of them with the *centuries* [o] of his good friends, at his leiſure. For till he can tell us of a writer, who, neither in his *careleſs* nor *ambitious* humours, is capable of this folly, his accumulated citations, were they more to his pur-

[o] Pag. 397.

poſe

poſe than many of them are, will do him little ſervice. Unleſs, perhaps, we are to give up common ſenſe to authority, and pride ourſelves on mimicking the very defects of our *betters*. And even here he need not be at a loſs for *precedents*. For ſo the diſciples of Plato, we are told, in former times, affected to be *round-ſhoulder'd*, in compliment to their maſter; and Ariſtotle's worſhipers, becauſe of a natural impediment in this philoſopher's ſpeech, thought it to their credit to turn *ſtammerers*. And without doubt, while this faſhion prevailed, there were critics, who found out a *je ne ſçai quoi* in the *air* of the one party, and in the *eloquence* of the other.

97. SUSPENDIT PICTA VULTUM MENTEMQUE TABELLA.] Horace judiciouſly deſcribes *painting* by that peculiar circumſtance, which does moſt honour to this fine art. It is, that, in the hands of a maſter, it attaches, not the *eye* only, but the very *ſoul*, to its repreſentation of the *human affections and manners*. For it is in contemplating *ſubjects* of this kind, that the mind, with a fond and eager attention, *hangs* on the picture. Other imitations may *pleaſe*, but this warms and tranſports with *paſſion*. And, becauſe whatever addreſſes itſelf immediately to the *eye* affects us moſt, hence it is, that painting, ſo employed, becomes more efficacious to expreſs

expreſs the *manners* and imprint *characters*, than poetry itſelf: or rather, hath the advantages of the beſt and uſefulleſt ſpecies of poetry, the *dramatic*, when enforced by juſt action on the ſtage.

Quinctilian gives it the like preference to *oratory*. Speaking of the uſe of *action* in an orator, he obſerves, "Is [geſtus] quantum ha-"beat in oratore, momenti; ſatis vel ex eo "patet, quod pleraque, etiam citra verba, ſigni-"ficat. Quippe non manus ſolum, ſed nutus "etiam declarant noſtram voluntatem, et in "mutis pro ſermone ſunt: et ſalutatio fre-"quenter ſine voce intelligitur atque afficit, et "ex ingreſſu vultuque perſpicitur habitus ani-"morum: et animantium quoque, ſermone ca-"rentium, ira, laetitia, adulatio, et oculis et "quibuſdam aliis corporis ſignis deprehenditur. "Nec mirum, ſi iſta, quae tamen aliquo ſunt "poſita motu, tantum in animis valent: quum "*pictura, tacens opus, et habitûs ſemper ejuſdem, ſic* "*intimos penetret affectus, ut ipſam vim dicendi* "*nonnunquam ſuperare videatur* [*p*]."

We ſee then of what importance it is, ſince *affections* of every kind are equally within his power, that the painter apply himſelf to excite only *thoſe*, which are ſubſervient to good morals. An importance, of which Ariſtotle himſelf (who

[*p*] INST. ORAT. xi. 3.

was

was no enthusiast in the fine arts) was so sensible, that he gives it in charge, amongst other political instructions, to the governors of youth, "that they allow them to see no other pictures, "than such as have this moral aim and ten-"dency; of which kind were more especially "those of POLYGNOTUS." [POLIT. lib. viii. c. 5.]

For the *manner*, in which this moral efficacy of picture is brought about, we find it agreeably explained in that conversation of *Socrates* with *Parrhasius* in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon. The whole may be worth considering.

"PAINTING, said Socrates, one day, in a "conversation with the painter Parrhasius, is, I "think, the resemblance or imitation of sen-"sible objects. For you represent in colours, "bodies of all sorts, *hollow and projecting, bright "and obscure, hard and soft, old and new.*"—"We "do."—"And, when you would draw beautiful "pourtraits, since it is not possible to find any "*single figure* of a man, faultless in all its parts "and of exact proportion; your way is to collect, "from *several*, those members or features, which "are most perfect in each, and so, by joining "them together, to compound one whole body, "completely beautiful."—"That is our me-"thod."—"What then, continued Socrates, and "are you not able, also, to imitate in colours, the

"MANNERS;

" MANNERS; thoſe tendencies and diſpoſitions of " the ſoul, which are benevolent, friendly, and " amiable; ſuch as inſpire love and affection " into the heart, and whoſe ſoft inſinuations " carry with them the power of perſuaſion?"

" How, replied Parrhaſius, can the pencil " imitate *that*, which hath no proportion, co- " lour, or any other of thoſe properties, you " have been juſt now enumerating, as the objects " of ſight?"—" Why, is it not true, returned " Socrates, that a man ſometimes caſts a *kind*, " ſometimes an *angry*, look on others?"—"It is." —" There muſt then be ſomething in the eyes " capable of expreſſing thoſe paſſions."—"There " muſt."—" And is there not a wide difference " between the look of him, who takes part in " the proſperity of a friend, and another, who " ſympathizes with him in his ſorrows?"—"Un- " doubtedly, there is the wideſt. The counte- " nance, in the one caſe, expreſſes joy, in the " other, concern."—" Theſe affections may then " be repreſented in picture."—" They may ſo." " In like manner, all other diſpoſitions of our " nature, *the lofty and the liberal, the abject and* " *ungenerous, the temperate and the prudent, the* " *petulant and profligate*, theſe are ſeverally diſ- " cernible by the *look or attitude:* and that, whe- " ther we obſerve men in *action*, or at *reſt*. "They " are."—" And theſe, therefore, come within

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"the power of graphical imitation?"—"They "do."—"Which then, concluded Socrates, do "you believe, men take the greatest pleasure in "contemplating; such imitations, as set before "them the GOOD, the LOVELY, and the FAIR, "or those, which represent the BAD, the "HATEFUL, and the UGLY, *qualities and affec-* "*tions of humanity?*"—"There can be no doubt, "said Parrhasius, of their giving the preference "to the former." [Lib. iii.]

The conclusion, the *philosopher* drives at in this conversation, and which the *painter* readily concedes to him, is what, I am persuaded, every master of the art would be willing to act upon, were he at liberty to pursue the bent of his natural genius and inclination. But it unfortunately happens, to the infinite prejudice of this *mode of imitation*, above all others, that the artist *designs* not so much what the dignity of his profession requires of him, or the general taste of those he would most wish for his judges, approves; as what the rich or noble *connoisseur*, who *bespeaks* his work, and prescribes the subject, demands. What this has usually been, let the history of ancient and modern painting declare [q]. Yet, considering its vast power

[q] There having been such wretches, as the painter Plutarch speaks of—Χαιρεφάνης, ἀκολάστως ὁμιλίας γυναικῶν πρὸς ἄνδρας. De aud. Poët.

in

in MORALS, as explained above, one cannot enough lament the ill deſtiny of this divine ART; which, from the chaſte hand-maid of *virtue*, hath been debauched, in violence to her nature, to a ſhameleſs proſtitute of *vice*, and procureſs of *pleaſure*.

117. SCRIBIMUS INDOCTI DOCTIQUE POEMATA PASSIM.] The DOCTI POETAE have at all times been eſteemed by the wiſe and good, or, rather, have been reverenced, as Plato ſpeaks, ὥσπερ παλέρες τῆς σοφίας καὶ ἡγεμόνες.

As for the INDOCTI, we may take their character as drawn by the ſevere, but juſt, pen of our great Milton—— "Poëtas equidem verè "dictos et diligo et colo et audiendo ſaepiſſimè "delector—iſtos verò verſiculorum nugivendos "quis non oderit? quo genere nihil ſtultius "aut vanius aut corruptius, aut mendacius. "Laudant, vituperant, ſine delectu, ſine diſ- "crimine, judicio aut modo, nunc principes, "nunc plebeios, doctos juxta atque indoctos, "probos an improbos perindè habent; prout "cantharus, aut ſpes nummuli, aut fatuus ille "furor inflat ac rapit; congeſtis undique et "verborum et rerum tot diſcoloribus ineptiis "tamque putidis, ut laudatum longè praeſtet "ſileri, et pravo, quod aiunt, vivere naſo, "quàm ſic laudari: vituperatus verò qui ſit, "haud

" haud mediocri ſanè honori ſibi ducat, ſe tam " abſurdis, tam ſtolidis nebulonibus diſplicere." DEF. SECUND. PRO POP. ANG. p. 337. 4°. Lond. 1753.

118. HIC ERROR TAMEN, &c.] What follows from hence to line 136, containing an encomium on *the office of poets*, is one of the leading beauties in the epiſtle. Its artifice conſiſts in this, that, under the cover of a negligent commendation, interſperſed with even ſome *traits* of pleaſantry upon them, it inſinuates to the emperor, in the manner the leaſt offenſive and oſtentatious, the genuine merits, and even *ſacredneſs* of their character. The whole is a fine inſtance of that addreſs, which, in delivering rules for this kind of writing, the poet preſcribes elſewhere:

Et ſermone opus eſt modo triſti, ſaepe jocoſo,
Defendente vicem modo rhetoris atque poëtae;
Interdum URBANI PARCENTIS VIRIBUS ATQUE
EXTENUANTIS EAS CONSULTO. [1 S. x. 14.]

This conduct, in the place before us, ſhews the poet's exquiſite knowledge of *human nature*. For there is no ſurer method of removing prejudices, and gaining over *others* to an eſteem of any thing we would recommend, than by not appearing to lay too great a ſtreſs on it *ourſelves*.

It

It is, further, a proof of his intimate acquaintance with the peculiar turn of the *great*; who, not being forward to think highly of any thing but themſelves, and their own dignities, are, with difficulty, brought to conceive of other accompliſhments, as of much value; and can only be won by the fair and candid addreſs of their apologiſt, who muſt be ſure not to carry his praiſes and pretenſions too high. It is this art of entering into the *characters, prejudices, and expectations* of others, and of knowing to ſuit our application, prudently, but with innocence, to them, which conſtitutes what we call A KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD. An art, of which the great poet was a conſummate maſter, and than which there cannot be a more uſeful or amiable quality. Only we muſt take care not to confound it with that ſupple, verſatile, and intriguing genius, which, taking all ſhapes, and reflecting all characters, generally paſſes for it in the commerce of the world, or rather is prized much above it; but, as requiring no other talents in the poſſeſſor, than thoſe of a *low cunning* and *corrupt deſign*, is of all others the moſt miſchievous, worthleſs, and contemptible character, that infeſts human life.

118. HIC ERROR TAMEN ET LEVIS HAEC INSANIA QUANTAS VIRTUTES HABEAT, SIC COLLIGE:]

COLLIGE.] This apology for *poets*, and, in them, for *poetry* itſelf, though delivered with much apparent negligence and unconcern, yet, if conſidered, will be found to comprize in it every thing, that any, or all, of its moſt zealous advocates have ever pretended in its behalf. For it comprehends,

I. [From line 118 to 124,] THE PERSONAL GOOD QUALITIES OF THE POET. Nothing is more inſiſted on by thoſe, who take upon themſelves the patronage and recommendation of any *art*, than that it tends to raiſe in the profeſſor of it all thoſe *virtues*, which contribute moſt to his *own* proper enjoyment, and render him moſt agreeable to *others*. Now this, it ſeems, may be urged, on the ſide of *poetry*, with a peculiar force. For not only the *ſtudy* of this art hath a *direct* tendency to produce a neglect or diſregard of *worldly honours and emoluments* (from the too eager appetite of which almoſt all the *calamities*, as well as the more unfriendly *vices*, of men ariſe) but he, whom the benign aſpect of the muſe hath glanced upon, and deſtined for her peculiar ſervice, is, by *conſtitution*, which is ever the beſt ſecurity, fortified againſt the attacks of them. Thus his RAPTURES in the enjoyment of his muſe make him overlook *the common accidents of life*: [line 121] *he is generous, open, and undeſigning, by* NATURE: [line 122]

to which we muſt not forget to add, that he is *temperate*, that is to ſay, *poor*, by PROFESSION.

VIVIT SILIQUIS ET PANE SECUNDO.

II. [From line 124 to 132.] THE UTILITY OF THE POET TO THE STATE: and this both on a *civil* and *moral* account. For, 1. the poets, whom we read in our younger years, and from whom we learn the *power of words*, and *hidden harmony of numbers*, that is, as a profound Scotchman teaches, the *firſt and moſt eſſential principles* of eloquence [r], enable, by degrees, and inſtruct their pupil to appear, with advantage, in that extenſively uſeful capacity of a public ſpeaker. And, indeed, graver writers than our poet have ſent the orator to this ſchool. But the pretenſions of poetry go much farther. It delights [from line 130 to 132] to immortalize the triumphs of virtue: to *record* or *feign* illuſtrious examples of heroic worth, for the ſervice of the *riſing age*: and, which is the laſt and beſt fruit of philoſophy itſelf, it can relieve even the languor of *ill-health*, and ſuſtain *poverty* herſelf under the ſcorn and inſult of contumelious opulence. 2. In a *moral* view its ſervices are not leſs conſiderable. (For it may be obſerved the *poet* was ſo far of a mind with the *philoſopher*,

[r] See an Eſſay on the *Compoſition of the Antients*, by J. GEDDES, Eſq;

to

to give no quarter to *immoral* poets). And to this end it ſerves, 1. [line 127] *in turning the ear of youth* from that early corruptor of its innocence, the ſeducement of a *baſe and impure communication*. 2. Next [line 128] in forming our riper age (which it does with all the addreſs and tenderneſs of *friendſhip*: AMICIS *præceptis*) *by the ſanctity and wiſdom of its precepts*. And, 3. which is the proper office of *tragedy*, in *correcting the exceſſes of the natural paſſions* [line 122]. The reader who doth not turn himſelf to the original, will be apt to miſtake this detail of the virtues of poetry, for an account of the policy and legiſlation of ancient and modern times; whoſe proudeſt boaſt, when the philanthropy of their enthuſiaſtic projectors ran at the higheſt, was but to *prevent the impreſſions of vice*: to *form the mind to habits of virtue*: and *to curb and regulate the paſſions*.

III. HIS SERVICES TO RELIGION. This might well enough be ſaid, whether by *religion* we underſtand an *internal reverence* of the gods, which poetry firſt and principally intended; or their *popular adoration and worſhip*, which, by its *fictions*, as of neceſſity conforming to the received fancies of ſuperſtition, it muſt greatly tend to promote and eſtabliſh. But the poet, artfully ſeizing a circumſtance, which ſuppoſes

and includes in it both theſe reſpects, renders his defence vaſtly intereſting.

All the cuſtomary *addreſſes* of heatheniſm to its gods, more eſpecially on any great and ſolemn emergency, were the work of the poet. For *nature*, it ſeems, had taught the pagan world, what the Hebrew prophets themſelves did not diſdain to practiſe, that, to lift the imagination, and, with it, the ſluggiſh affections of human nature, to heaven, it was expedient to lay hold on every aſſiſtance of art. They therefore preſented their ſupplications to the divinity in the richeſt and brighteſt dreſs of eloquence, which is poetry. Not to inſiſt, that *devotion*, when ſincere and ardent, from its very *nature*, enkindles a glow of thought, which communicates ſtrongly with the tranſports of poetry. Hence *the language of the gods* (for ſo was poetry accounted, as well from its being the divineſt ſpecies of communication, our rude conceptions can well frame even for ſuperior intelligencies, as for that it was the fitteſt vehicle of our applications to them) became not the ornament only, but an *eſſential* in the ceremonial, of paganiſm. And this, together with an alluſion to *a form of public prayer* (for ſuch was his *ſecular ode)* compoſed by himſelf, gives, at once, a grace and ſublimity to this part of the apology, which are perfectly inimitable.

Thus

Thus hath the great poet, in the compaſs of a few lines, drawn together a complete defence of his *art*. For what more could the warmeſt admirer of poetry, or, becauſe zeal is quickened by oppoſition, what more could the vehement declaimer againſt Plato (who proſcribed it), urge in its behalf, than that it furniſhes, to the poet himſelf, the ſureſt means of *ſolitary and ſocial* enjoyment: and further ſerves to the moſt important CIVIL, MORAL, and RELIGIOUS purpoſes?

119. — VATIS AVARUS NON TEMERE EST ANIMUS.] There is an unlucky Italian proverb, which ſays, *Chi ben ſcrive, non ſara mai ricco.*—The true reaſon, without doubt, is here given by the poet.

124. MILITIAE QUAMQUAM PIGER ET MALUS.] The obſervation has much grace, as referring to himſelf, who had acquired no credit, as a ſoldier, in the civil wars of his country.—We have an example of this miſalliance between the *poetic* and *military* character, recorded in the hiſtory of our own civil wars, which may be juſt worth mentioning. Sir P. Warwick, ſpeaking of the famous Earl of *Newcaſtle*, obſerves—"his edge had too much "of the razor in it; for he had a tincture of a

"romantic ſpirit, and had the misfortune to "have ſomewhat of the poet in him; ſo as he "choſe Sir William Davenant, an eminent "good poet, and loyal gentleman, to be lieu-"tenant-general of his ordnance. This inclina-"tion of his own, and ſuch kind of witty ſo-"ciety (to be modeſt in the expreſſions of it) "diverted many councils, and loſt many oppor-"tunities, which the nature of that affair, this "great man had now entered into, required." MEMOIRS, p. 235.

132. CASTIS CUM PUERIS, &c.] We have, before, taken notice, how properly the poet, for the eaſier and more ſucceſsful introduction of his apology, aſſumed the perſon *urbani, parcentis viribus*. We ſee him here, in *that* of *rhetoris atque poetae*. For admoniſhed, as it were, by the riſing dignity of his ſubject, which led him from the *moral*, to ſpeak of the *religious* uſes of poetry, he inſenſibly drops the *badineur*, and takes an air, not of ſerioufneſs only, but of ſolemnity. This change is made with *art*. For the attention is carried from the uſes of poetry, in *conſoling the unhappy*, by the eaſieſt tranſition imaginable, to the ſtill more ſolemn application of it to the *offices of piety*. And its *uſe* is, to impreſs on the mind a ſtronger ſenſe of the weight of the poet's plea, than could have been expected

expected from a more direct and continued declamation. For this is the conſtant and natural effect of knowing to paſs from *gay* to *ſevere*, with grace and dignity.

169. SED HABET COMOEDIA TANTO PLUS ONERIS, QUANTO VENIAE MINUS.] Tragedy, whoſe intention is to *affect*, may ſecure what is moſt eſſential to its *kind*, though it fail in ſome minuter reſemblances of *nature*: Comedy, propoſing for its main end *exact repreſentation*, is fundamentally defective, if it do not perfectly ſucceed in it. And this explains the ground of the poet's obſervation, that comedy hath *veniae minus*; for he is ſpeaking of the draught of the *manners* only, in which reſpect a greater *indulgence* is very deſervedly ſhewn to the tragic than comic writer. But though tragedy hath thus far the advantage, yet, in another reſpect, its laws are more ſevere than thoſe of comedy; and that is in the conduct of the *fable*. It may be aſked then, which of the two dramas is, on the whole, moſt difficult. To which the anſwer is deciſive. For tragedy, whoſe end is the *pathos*, produces it by *action*, while comedy produces its end, the *humourous*, by *character*. Now it is much more difficult to paint manners, than to plan action; becauſe *that* requires the

philoſopher's knowledge of human nature; *this*, only the hiſtorian's knowledge of human events.

It is true, in one ſenſe, the *tragic* muſe has *veniae minus*; for though grave and pleaſant ſcenes may be indifferently repreſented, or even mixed together, in comedy, yet, in tragedy, the ſerious and ſolemn air muſt prevail throughout. Indeed, our Shakeſpeare has violated this rule, as he hath, upon occaſion, almoſt every other rule, of juſt criticiſm: Whence, ſome writers, taking advantage of that idolatrous admiration which is generally profeſſed for this great poet, and nauſeating, I ſuppoſe, the more common, though juſter, forms of literary compoſition, have been for turning his very tranſgreſſion of the principles of common ſenſe, into a ſtanding precept for the ſtage. "It is ſaid, that, if "comedy may be wholly *ſerious*, why may not "tragedy now and then be indulged in being "*gay?*" If theſe critics be in earneſt, in putting this queſtion, they need not long wait for an anſwer. The *end* of comedy being *to paint the manners*, nothing hinders (as I have ſhewn at large in the diſſertation *on the provinces of the drama*) but "that it may take either character "of *pleaſant* or *ſerious*, as it chances, or even "unite them both in one piece:" But the end of tragedy being *to excite the ſtronger paſſions*, this diſcordancy in the ſubject breaks the flow

of

of thoſe paſſions, and ſo prevents, or leſſens at leaſt, the very effect which this drama primarily intends. "It is ſaid, indeed, that this contraſt "of *grave* and *pleaſant* ſcenes, heightens the "*paſſion*:" if it had been ſaid that it heightens the *ſurprize*, the obſervation had been more juſt. Laſtly, "we are told, that this is nature, "which generally blends together the *ludicrous* "and the *ſublime*." But who does not know

That art is nature to advantage dreſs'd;

and that to dreſs our nature *to advantage* in the preſent inſtance, that is, in a compoſition whoſe laws are to be deduced from the conſideration of its *end*, theſe characters are to be kept, by an artiſt, perfectly diſtinct?

However, this reſtraint upon tragedy does not prove that, upon the whole, it has *plus oneris*. All I can allow is, that either drama has *weight* enough, in all reaſon, for the ableſt *ſhoulders* to ſuſtain.

177. QUEM TULIT AD SCENAM VENTOSO GLORIA CURRU, EXANIMAT LENTUS SPECTATOR, &c. to line 182.] There is an exquiſite ſpirit of pleaſantry in theſe lines, which hath quite evaporated in the hands of the critics. Theſe have gravely ſuppoſed them to come from the *perſon* of the *poet*, and to contain his ſerious cenſure of the vanity of poetic fame. Whereas, beſides

beſides the manifeſt abſurdity of the thing, its inconſiſtency with what is delivered elſewhere on this ſubject [A. P. line 324.] where the Greeks are commended as being *praeter laudem nullius avari*, abſolutely requires us to underſtand them as proceeding from an *objector*; who, as the poet hath very ſatirically contrived, is left to expoſe himſelf in the very terms of his *objection*. He had juſt been blaming the venality of the Roman dramatic writers. They had ſhewn themſelves more ſollicitous about *filling their pockets*, than deſerving the reputation of good poets. And, inſtead of inſiſting further on the excellency of this *latter* motive, he ſtops ſhort, and brings in a bad poet himſelf to laugh at it.

"And, what then, ſays he, you would have "us yield ourſelves to the very wind and guſt "of praiſe; and, dropping all inferior con- "ſiderations, drive away to the expecting ſtage "in the *puffed car of vain-glory?* For what? "To be *diſpirited*, or blown up with air, as the "capricious ſpectator ſhall think fit to enforce "or withhold his *inſpirations*. And is this the "mighty benefit of your vaunted paſſion for "fame? No; farewel the ſtage, if the breath "of others is *that*, on which the ſilly bard is "to depend for the contraction or enlargement "of his dimenſions." To all which convincing rhetoric, the poet condeſcends to ſay nothing;

as

as well knowing, that no truer ſervice is, oftentimes, done to virtue or good ſenſe, than when a knave or fool is left to himſelf, to employ his idle raillery againſt either.

Theſe interlocutory paſſages, laying open the ſentiments of thoſe againſt whom the poet is diſputing, are very frequent in the *critical and moral* writings of Horace, and are well ſuited to their dramatic genius and original.

210. ILLE PER EXTENTUM FUNEM, &c.] The Romans, who were immoderately addicted to ſpectacles of every kind, had in particular eſteem the *funambuli*, or *rope-dancers*:

Ita populus ſtudio ſtupidus in FUNAMBULO
Animum occupavit. PROL. in HECYR.

From the admiration of whoſe tricks the expreſſion, *ire per extentum funem*, came to denote, proverbially, *an uncommon degree of excellence and perfection in any thing*. The alluſion is, here, made with much pleaſantry, as the poet had juſt been raillying their fondneſs for theſe *extraordinary atchievements*.

Ibid. ILLE PER EXTENTUM FUNEM, &c. to line 214.] It is obſervable, that Horace, here, makes his own *feeling* the teſt of poetical merit. Which is ſaid with a philoſophical exactneſs.

For the *pathos* in tragic, *humour* in comic, and the ſame holds of the *ſublime* in the narrative, and of every other *ſpecies* of excellence in univerſal poetry, is the object not of *reaſon*, but *ſentiment*; and can be eſtimated only from its *impreſſion* on the mind, not by any ſpeculative or general *rules*. Rules themſelves are indeed nothing elſe but an appeal to *experience*; concluſions drawn from wide and general obſervation of the aptneſs and efficacy of certain *means* to produce thoſe *impreſſions*. So that feeling or ſentiment itſelf is not only the ſureſt but the ſole *ultimate* arbiter of works of genius.

Yet, though this be true, the *invention* of *general rules* is not without its merit, nor the *application* of them without its *uſe*, as may appear from the following conſiderations.

It may be affirmed, univerſally, of all *didactic writing*, that it is employed in *referring particular facts to general principles*. General principles themſelves can often be referred to others more general; and theſe again carried ſtill higher, till we come to a *ſingle* principle, in which all the reſt are involved. When this is done, ſcience of every kind hath attained its higheſt perfection.

The account, here given, might be illuſtrated from various inſtances. But it will be ſufficient to confine ourſelves to the ſingle one of *criticiſm*;

criticiſm; by which I underſtand that *ſpecies* of didactic writing, which *refers to general rules the virtues and faults of compoſition.* And the perfection of this *art* would conſiſt in an ability to refer *every* beauty and blemiſh to a ſeparate claſs; and *every* claſs, by a gradual progreſſion, to ſome *one* ſingle principle. But the *art* is, as yet, far ſhort of perfection. For many of theſe beauties and blemiſhes can be referred to no general rule at all; and the rules, which have been diſcovered, ſeem many of them unconnected, and not reducible to a common principle. It muſt be admitted, however, that ſuch critics are employed in their proper office, as contribute to the *confirmation* of rules already eſtabliſhed, or the *invention* of new ones.

Rules already eſtabliſhed are then *confirmed*, when more *particulars* are referred to them. The invention of *new* rules implies, 1. A *collection* of various particulars, not yet regulated. 2. A *diſcovery* of thoſe circumſtances of *reſemblance* or *agreement*, whereby they become capable of being regulated. And, 3. A ſubſequent *regulation* of them, or arrangement into *one* claſs according to *ſuch* circumſtances of *agreement*. When this is done, the rule is completed. But if the critic is not able to obſerve any *common* circumſtance of reſemblance in the ſeveral particulars he hath collected, by which they may, all of them,

them, be referred to one general claſs, he hath then made no advancement in the *art of criticiſm*. Yet the collection of his particular obſervations may be of uſe to other critics; juſt as collections of natural hiſtory, though no part of philoſophy, may yet aſſiſt philoſophical enquirers.

We ſee then from this general view of the matter, that the *merit* of inventing *general rules* conſiſts in reducing criticiſm to an *art*; and that the *uſe* of applying them, in practice, when the art is thus formed, is, to direct the caprices of *taſte* by the authority of rule, which we call *reaſon*.

And, thus much being premiſed, we ſhall now be able to form a proper judgment of the *method*, which ſome of the moſt admired of the antients, as well as moderns, have taken in this *work of criticizing*. The moſt eminent, at leaſt the moſt popular, are, perhaps, Longinus, of the Greeks; P. Bouhours, of the French; and Mr. Addiſon, with us in England.

1. *All* the beautiful paſſages, which LONGINUS cites, are referred by him to *five* general claſſes. And, 2dly, Theſe general claſſes belong all to the *common* principle of *ſublimity*. He does not ſay this paſſage is *excellent*, but aſſigns the *kind* of excellence, *viz. ſublimity*. Neither does he content himſelf with the general notion of *ſublimity*, but names the *ſpecies*, viz. *Grandeur* of *ſentiment*,

ment, power of moving the *paſſions*, &c. His work therefore enables us to *claſs* our perceptions of excellence, and conſequently is formed on the *true plan* of criticiſm.

2. The ſame may be obſerved of P. Bouhours. The paſſages, cited by him, are never mentioned *in general* terms as *good* or *bad*: but are inſtances of good or bad *ſentiment*. This is the *genus*, in which *all* his inſtances are comprehended: but of this genus he marks alſo the diſtinct *ſpecies*. He does not ſay, this ſentiment is *good*; but it is *ſublime*, or *natural*, or *beautiful*, or *delicate*: or, that another ſentiment is *bad*; but that it is *mean*, or *falſe*, or *deformed*, or *affected*. To theſe ſeveral claſſes he refers his particular inſtances: and theſe claſſes themſelves are referred to the more comprehenſive principles of the excellence or fault of *ſingle ſentiment*, as oppoſed to the various *other* excellences and faults, which are obſerved in compoſition.

3. Mr. Addison, in his *criticiſm on Milton*, proceeded in like manner. For, *firſt*, theſe remarks are evidently applicable to the general obſervations on the poem; in which every thing is referred to the common heads of *fable*, *morals*, *ſentiments*, and *language*; and even the *ſpecific* excellences and faults conſidered under each head diſtinctly marked out. *Secondly*, The ſame is true concerning *many* of the obſervations on

particular

particular paſſages. The reader is not only told, that a paſſage *has* merit; but is informed what *ſort* of merit belongs to it.

Neither are the remaining obſervations wholly without uſe. For ſuch particular beauties and blemiſhes, as are barely *collected*, may yet ſerve as a foundation to future enquirers for making further diſcoveries. They may be conſidered as ſo many *ſingle* facts, an *attention* to which is excited by the authority of the critic; and when theſe are conſidered jointly with ſuch as *others* may have obſerved, thoſe general principles of *ſimilitude* may at length be found, which ſhall enable us to conſtitute *new* claſſes of poetical merit or blame.

Thus far the candid reader may go in apologizing for the *merits* of theſe writers. But as, in ſound criticiſm, candour muſt not be indulged at the expence of *juſtice*, I think myſelf obliged to add an obſervation concerning their *defects*; and *that*, on what I muſt think the juſt principles here delivered.

Though the method, taken by theſe writers, be *ſcientifical*, the real ſervice they have done to criticiſm is not very conſiderable. And the reaſon is, they dwell too much in *generals*: that is, not only the *genus*, to which they refer their *ſpecies*, is too large, but thoſe very ſubordinate ſpecies themſelves are too comprehenſive.

Of

Of the *three* critics, under conſideration, the moſt inſtructive is, unqueſtionably, *Longinus*. The *genus* itſelf, under which he ranks his ſeveral *claſſes*, is as *particular*, as the ſpecies of the other two. Yet even *his* claſſes are much too general to convey any very diſtinct and uſeful information. It had been ſtill better, if this fine critic had deſcended to lower and more minute *particularities*, as ſubordinate to *each claſs*. For to obſerve of any *ſentiment*, that it is *grand*, or *pathetic*, and ſo of the other *ſpecies* of ſublime, is ſaying very little. Few readers want to be informed of this. It had been ſufficient, if any notice was to be taken at all of ſo *general* beauties, to have done it in the way, which ſome of the beſt critics have taken, of merely pointing to them. But could he have diſcovered, and produced to obſervation, thoſe *peculiar* qualities in *ſentiment*, which occaſion the impreſſion of *grandeur*, *pathos*, *&c.* this had been advancing the ſcience of criticiſm very much, as tending to lay open the more ſecret and hidden ſprings of that *pleaſure*, which reſults from poetical compoſition.

P. Boubours, as I obſerved, is ſtill more faulty. His very *ſpecies* are ſo large, as make his criticiſm almoſt wholly uſeleſs and inſignificant.

It gives one pain to refuſe to ſuch a writer, as Mr. *Addiſon*, any *kind* of merit, which he ap-

pears to have valued himſelf upon, and which the generality of his readers have ſeemed willing to allow him. Yet it muſt not be diſſembled, that *criticiſm* was by no means his talent. His taſte was truly elegant; but he had neither that vigour of underſtanding, nor chaſtiſed, philoſophical ſpirit, which are ſo eſſential to this character, and which we find in hardly any of the antients beſides Ariſtotle, and but in a very few of the moderns. For what concerns his *criticiſm on Milton* in particular, there was this accidental benefit ariſing from it, that it occaſioned an admirable poet to be read, and his excellencies to be obſerved. But for the merit of the work itſelf, if there be any thing juſt in the *plan*, it was, becauſe Ariſtotle and Boſſu had taken the ſame route before him. And as to his *own* proper obſervations, they are for the moſt part ſo general and indeterminate, as to afford but little inſtruction to the reader, and are, not unfrequently, altogether frivolous. They are of a kind with thoſe, in which the French critics (for I had rather inſtance in the defects of *foreign* writers than of our *own*) ſo much abound; and which good judges agree to rank in the worſt ſort of criticiſm. To give one example for all.

Cardinal PERRON, taking occaſion to commend certain pieces of the poet RONSARD, chuſes

chuſes to deliver himſelf in the following manners: "Prenez de lui quelque poëme que ce "ſoit, il paye toujours ſon lecteur, et quand la "verve le prend, il ſe guinde en haut, il vous "porte juſques dans les nuës, il vous fait voir "mille belles choſes.

"Que ſes *faiſons* ſont *bien-faites!* Que la "deſcription de la lyre a Bertaut eſt *admirable!* "Que le diſcours au miniſtre, *excellent!* Tous "ſes hymnes ſont *beaux.* Celui de l'eternité "eſt *admirable*; ceux des ſaiſons *marveilleux.*" [Perroniana.]

What now has the reader learned from this varied criticiſm, but that his *Eminence* was indeed very fond of his poet; and that he eſteemed theſe ſeveral pieces to be (what with leſs expence of words he might, in one breath, have called them) *well-turned*, *beautiful*, *excellent*, *admirable*, *marvellous*, poems? To have given us the true character of *each*, and to have marked the preciſe *degree*, as well as *kind*, of merit in theſe works, had been a taſk of another nature.

211. — QUI PECTUS INANITER ANGIT.] The word *inaniter*, as well as *falſi*, applied in the following line to *terrores*, would expreſs that wondrous force of *dramatic repreſentation*, which compels us to take part in *feigned* adventures and ſituations, as if they were *real*; and exer-

ciſes the paſſions with the ſame violence, in *remote fancied ſcenes*, as in the *preſent diſtreſſes of real life*.

And this is that ſovereign quality in poetry, which, as an old writer of our own naturally expreſſes it, is of force *to hold children from play, and old men from the chimney corner* [*s*]. The poet, in the place before us, conſiders it as a kind of *magic virtue*, which tranſports the ſpectator into all *places*, and makes him, occaſionally, aſſume all *perſons*. The reſemblance holds, alſo, in this, that its effects are inſtantaneous and irreſiſtible. *Rules*, *art*, *decorum*, all fall before it. It goes directly to the *heart*, and gains all purpoſes at once. Hence it is, that, ſpeaking of a real genius, poſſeſſed of this commanding power, Horace pronounces him, emphatically, THE POET,

Ille per extentum funem mihi poſſe videtur
Ire POETA :

it being more eſpecially this property, which, of itſelf, diſcovers the *true dramatiſt*, and ſecures the ſucceſs of his performance, not only without the aſſiſtance of *art*, but in direct oppoſition to its cleareſt dictates.

This power has been felt on a thouſand other occaſions. But its triumphs were never more

[*s*] Sir Philip Sidney.

conſpicuous,

conſpicuous, than in the famous inſtance of the CID of P. Corneille; which, by the ſole means of this enchanting quality, drew along with it the affections and applauſes of a whole people; notwithſtanding the manifeſt tranſgreſſion of ſome eſſential rules, the utmoſt tyranny of jealous power, and, what is more, in defiance of all the authority and good ſenſe of one of the juſteſt pieces of criticiſm in the French language, written purpoſely to diſcredit and expoſe it.

224. CUM LAMENTAMUR NON APPARERE LABORES NOSTROS, &c.] It was remarked upon line 211, that the beauties of a poem can only *appear* by being felt. And *they*, to whom they do not appear in this inſtance, are the writer's own *friends*, who, it is not to be ſuppoſed, would diſguiſe their *feelings*. So that the *lamentation*, here ſpoken of, is at once a proof of *impertinence* in the poet, and of the *badneſs* of his poetry, which ſets the complainant in a very ridiculous light.

228. EGERE VETES.] The poet intended, in theſe words, a very juſt ſatire on thoſe preſuming *wits and ſcholars*, who, under the pretence of getting above diſtreſsful *want*, in reality aſpire to public honours and preferments; though

this be the moſt inexcuſable of all follies (to give it the ſofteſt name), which can infeſt a man of letters: Both, becauſe experience, on which a wiſe man would chuſe to regulate himſelf, is contrary to theſe hopes; and becauſe, if literary merit could ſucceed in them, the *reward*, as the poet ſpeaks,

would either bring
No joy, or be deſtructive of the thing:

That is, the learned would either have no reliſh for the delights of ſo widely different a ſituation; or, which hath oftener been the caſe, would loſe the learning itſelf, or the *love* of it at leaſt, on which their pretenſions to this *reward* are founded.

232. GRATUS ALEXANDRO REGI MAGNO, &c.] This praiſe of Auguſtus, ariſing from the compariſon of his character with that of Alexander, is extremely fine. It had been obſerved of the Macedonian by his hiſtorians and panegyriſts, that, to the ſtern virtues of the *conqueror*, he had joined the ſofter accompliſhments of the *virtuoſo*, in a juſt diſcernment and love of *poetry*, and of the *elegant arts*. The one was thought clear, from his admiration and ſtudy of Homer: And the *other*, from his famous edict concerning Apelles and Lyſippus, could not be denied. Horace finds means to turn both theſe circumſtances

circumſtances in his ſtory to the advantage of his prince.

From his extravagant pay of ſuch a wretched verſifier as *Choerilus*, he would inſinuate, that Alexander's love of the muſe was, in fact, but a blind unintelligent impulſe towards *glory*. And from his greater ſkill in the arts of *ſculpture* and *painting*, than of *verſe*, he repreſents him as more concerned about the *drawing* of his figure, than the pourtraiture of his *manners and mind*. Whereas Auguſtus, by his liberalities to *Varius* and *Virgil*, had diſcovered the trueſt taſte in the *art*, from which he expected immortality: and, in truſting to *that*, as the *chief* inſtrument of his fame, had confeſſed a prior regard to thoſe *mental virtues*, which are the real ornament of humanity, before that *look of terror*, and *air and attitude of victory*, in which the brute violence of Alexander moſt delighted to be ſhewn.

243. MUSARUM DONA.] The expreſſion is happy; as implying, that theſe *images* of virtue, which are repreſented as of ſuch importance to the glory of princes, are not the mere *offerings* of poetry to greatneſs, but the *free-gifts* of the muſe to the poet. For it is only to ſuch *works*, as theſe, that Horace attributes the wondrous efficacy of expreſſing the *manners and mind* in

fuller and more durable relief, than *ſculpture* gives to the *exterior figure*.

Non magis expreſſi vultus per aënea ſigna,
Quam per vatis opus mores animique virorum
Clarorum adparent.

247.—VIRGILIUS.] Virgil is mentioned, in this place, ſimply as a *poet*. The preciſe idea of his *poetry* is given us elſewhere.

molle atque facetum
Virgilio annuerunt gaudentes rure Camaenae.
[1 Sat. x. 44.

But this may appear a ſtrange praiſe of the ſweet and poliſhed Virgil. It may appear ſo to Quinctilian, who cites this paſſage, and explains it, without doubt, very juſtly, yet in ſuch a way as ſhews that he was not quite certain of the truth of his explanation.

The caſe, I believe, was this. The word *facetum*, which makes the difficulty, had acquired, in Quinctilian's days, the ſenſe of *pleaſant, witty*, or *facetious, in excluſion* to every other idea, which had formerly belonged to it. It is true that, in the Auguſtan age, and ſtill earlier, *facetum* was ſometimes uſed in this ſenſe. But its proper and original meaning was no more than *exact, factitatum, benè factum*. And in this ſtrict ſenſe, I believe, it is always uſed by Horace.

Malthinus

Malthinus tunicis demiſſis ambulat: eſt qui
Inguen ad obſcenum ſubductis uſque facetus.

1 Sat. II. 25.

i. e. *tucked up, trim, expedite.*

Mutatis tantùm pedibus numeriſque facetus.

1 Sat. IV. 7.

i. e. he [Lucilius] adopted a *ſtricter* meaſure, than the writers of the old comedy; or, by changing the looſe iambic to the hexameter verſe, he gave a proof his *art, ſkill,* and *improved judgment.*

frater, pater, adde;
Ut cuique eſt ætas, ita quemque facetus *adopta.*

1 Ep. VI. 55.

i. e. *nicely* and *accurately* adapt your addreſs to the age and condition of each.

I do not recollect any other place where *facetus* is uſed by Horace; and in all theſe it ſeems probable to me that the principal idea, conveyed by it, is that of *care, art, ſkill,* only differently modified according to the ſubject to which it is applied: a gown tucked up *with care*—a meaſure *ſtudiouſly* affected—an addreſs *nicely* accommodated—No thought of *ridicule* or *pleaſantry* intended.

It is the ſame in the preſent inſtance—

MOLLE ATQUE FACETUM,

i. e.

i. e. *a ſoft flowing verſification*, and *an exquiſitely finiſhed expreſſion:* the two preciſe, characteriſtic merits of Virgil's *rural* poetry.

This change, in the ſenſe of words, is common in all languages, and creeps in ſo gradually and imperceptibly as to elude the notice, ſometimes, of the beſt critics, even in their own language. The tranſition of ideas, in the preſent inſtance, may be traced thus. As what was *wittily* ſaid, was moſt *ſtudied*, *artificial*, and *exquiſite*; hence in proceſs of time *facetum* loſt its primary ſenſe, and came to ſignify merely, *witty*.

We have a like example in our own language. A *good wit* meant formerly a man of good natural ſenſe and underſtanding: but becauſe what we now call *wit* was obſerved to be the flower and quinteſſence, as it were, of good ſenſe, hence *a man of wit* is now the excluſive attribute of one who exerts his good ſenſe in that peculiar manner.

247. DILECTI TIBI VIRGILIUS, &c.] It does honour to the memory of Auguſtus, that he bore the *affection*, here ſpoken of, to this amiable poet; who was not more diſtinguiſhed from his contemporary writers by the force of an original, inventive genius, than the ſingular benevolence and humanity of his character. Yet there

there have been critics of ſo perverſe a turn, as to diſcover an inclination, at leaſt, of diſputing both.

1. Some have taken offence at his ſuppoſed unfriendly neglect of Horace, who, on every occaſion, ſhewed himſelf ſo ready to laviſh all his praiſes on him. But the folly of this ſlander is of a piece with its malignity, as proceeding on the abſurd fancy, that Virgil's friends might as eaſily have ſlid into ſuch works, as the Georgics and Eneis, as thoſe of Horace into the various occaſional poems, which employed his pen.

Juſt ſuch another ſenſeleſs ſuſpicion hath been raiſed of his jealouſy of Homer's ſuperior glory (a vice, from which the nature of the great poet was ſingularly abhorrent), only becauſe he did not think fit to give him the firſt place among the poets in *Elyſium*, ſeveral hundred years before he had ſo much as made his appearance upon *earth*.

But theſe petty calumnies of his *moral* character hardly deſerve a confutation. What ſome greater authorities have objected to his *poetical*, may be thought more ſerious. For,

2. It has been given out by ſome of better note among the moderns, and from thence, according to the cuſtomary influence of authority, hath become the prevailing ſentiment of the generality

generality of the learned, that the great poet was more indebted for his fame to the *exactneſs of his judgment*; *to his induſtry, and a certain trick of imitation*, than to the energy of natural genius; which he is thought to have poſſeſſed in a very ſlender degree.

This charge is founded on the ſimilitude, which all acknowledge, betwixt his great work, the Aeneïs, and the poems of Homer. But, "how far ſuch ſimilitude infers imitation; or, "how far imitation itſelf infers an inferiority "of natural genius in the imitator," this hath never been conſidered. In ſhort, the affair of *imitation* in poetry, though one of the moſt curious and intereſting in all criticiſm, hath been, hitherto, very little underſtood: as may appear from hence, that there is not, as far as I can learn, one ſingle treatiſe, now extant, written purpoſely to explain it; the diſcourſe, which the learned *Menage* intended, and which, doubtleſs, would have given light to this matter, having never, as I know of, been made public. To ſupply, in ſome meaſure, this loſs, I have thought it not amiſs to put together, and methodize a few reflexions of my own on this ſubject, which (becauſe the matter is large, and cannot eaſily be drawn into a compaſs that ſuits with the nature of theſe occaſional remarks)

the

the reader will find in a diſtinct and ſeperate diſſertation upon it [*t*].

CONCLUSION.

And, now, having explained, in the beſt manner I could, the two famous Epiſtles of Horace to Auguſtus and the Piſos, it may be expected, in concluſion, that I ſhould ſay ſomething of the reſt of our poet's critical writings. For his *Sermones* (under which general term I include his *Epiſtles*) are of two ſorts, MORAL and CRITICAL; and, though both are exquiſite, the *latter* are, perhaps, in their kind, the more perfect of the two; his *moral* principles being ſometimes, I believe, liable to exception; his *critical*, never.

The two pieces, illuſtrated in theſe volumes, are *ſtrictly* critical: the *firſt*, being a profeſſed criticiſm of the Roman drama; and the *laſt*, in order to their vindication, of the Roman poets. The reſt of his works, which turn upon this ſubject of criticiſm, may be rather termed *Apologetical*. They are the IVth and X^th^ of the FIRST, and I^ſt^ of the SECOND book of Satires;

[*t*] Diſſ. III. in the third Volume.

and

and the XIXth of the FIRST, and, in part, the II^d^ of the SECOND book of Epiſtles.

In *theſe*, the poet has THREE great objects; one or other of which he never loſes ſight of, and generally he proſecutes them all together, in the ſame piece. Theſe objects are, 1. to vindicate the way of writing in ſatire. 2. To juſtify his opinion of a favourite writer of this claſs, the celebrated Lucilius. And, 3. to expoſe the careleſs and incorrect compoſition of the Roman writers.

He was himſelf deeply concerned in theſe three articles; ſo that he makes his own apology at the ſame time that he criticizes or cenſures others. The *addreſs* of the poet's manner will be ſeen by bearing in mind this general purpoſe of his critical poetry. How he came to be *engaged* in this controverſy, will beſt appear from a few obſervations on the ſtate of the Roman learning, when he undertook to contribute his pains to the improvement of it.

I have, in the introduction to the firſt of theſe volumes, given a ſlight ſketch of the riſe and progreſs of the Roman ſatire. This poem was purely of Roman invention: *firſt of all* ſtruck out of the old feſcennine farce, and rudely cultivated, by Ennius: *Next*, more happily treated, and enriched with the beſt part of the

the old comedy, by Lucilius: And, after ſome ſucceeding eſſays, taken up and finally adorned, by Horace.

HORACE was well known to the public by his lyric compoſitions, and ſtill more perhaps by his favour at court, when he took upon him to correct the manners and taſte of his age, by his *Lucilian Satires*. But, here, he encountered, at once, many prejudices; and all his own credit, together with that of his court-friends, was little enough to ſupport him, againſt the torrent.

FIRST, the kind of writing itſelf was ſure to give offence. For, though men were well enough pleaſed to have their natural malignity gratified by an old poet's ſatire againſt a *former* age, yet they were naturally alarmed at the exerciſe of this talent upon their *own*, and, as it might chance, upon themſelves.

The poet's eminence, and favour, would, beſides, give a peculiar force and *effect* to his cenſures; ſo that all who found, or thought themſelves liable to them, were concerned, in intereſt, to diſcredit the attempt, and blaſt his riſing reputation.

Omnes hi metuunt versus, odere POETAM.

Hence, he was conſtrained to ſtand upon his own defence, and to vindicate, as well the

thing itſelf, as his management of it, to the tender and ſuſpicious public.

But this was not all: For, SECONDLY, an old ſatiriſt, of high birth and quality, LUCILIUS, was conſidered, not only as an able writer of this claſs, but as a perfect model in it; and of courſe, therefore, this new ſatiriſt would be much decried and undervalued, on the compariſon. This circumſtance obliged the poet to reduce this admired writer to his real value; which could not be done without thwarting the general admiration, and pointing out his vices and defects in the freeſt manner. This perilous taſk he diſcharged in the IVth ſatire of his firſt book, and with ſuch rigour of criticiſm, that not only the partizans of Lucilius in the poet's own age, but the moſt knowing and candid critics of ſucceeding times, were diſpoſed to complain of it. However, the obnoxious ſtep had been taken; and nothing remained but to juſtify himſelf, as he hath done at large, in his X^th^ ſatire.

On the whole, in comparing what he has ſaid in theſe two ſatires with what Quinctilian long after obſerved on the ſubject of them, there ſeems no reaſon to conclude, that the poet judged ill: though he expreſſed his judgment in ſuch terms as he would, no doubt, have ſome-

thing

thing ſoftened (out of complaiſance to the general ſentiment, and a becoming deference to the real merits of his maſter), if his adverſaries had been more moderate in urging their charge, or if the occaſion had not been ſo preſſing.

Laſtly, this attack on Lucilius produced, or rather involved in it, a THIRD quarrel. The poet's main objection to Lucilius was his careleſs, verboſe, and haſty compoſition, which his admirers, no doubt, called genius, grace, and ſtrength. This being an inveterate folly among his countrymen, he gives it no quarter. Through all his critical works, he employs the utmoſt force of his wit and good ſenſe to expoſe it: And his own writings, being at the ſame time ſupremely correct, afforded his enemies (which would provoke them ſtill more) no advantage againſt him. Yet they attempted, as they could, to repay his perpetual reproaches on the popular writers for their neglect of *limae labor*, by objecting to him, in their turn, that what he wrote was *ſine nervis*: and this, though they felt his *force* themſelves, and though another ſet of men were complaining, at the ſame time, of his *ſeverity*,

Sunt quibus in ſatyrâ videor nimis ACER—
SINE NERVIS *altera quicquid*
Compoſui pars eſſe putat, ſimileſque meorum
Mille die verſus *deduci poſſe*—

His detractors ſatirically alluding, in theſe laſt words, to his charge againſt Lucilius —

in horâ *ſaepè* ducentos,
Ut magnum, verſus *dictabat, ſtans pede in uno.*

It is not my purpoſe, in this place, to enlarge further on the character of Lucilius, whoſe *wordy* ſatires gave occaſion to our poet's criticiſm. Several of the antient writers ſpeak of him occaſionally, in terms of the higheſt applauſe; and without doubt, he was a poet of diſtinguiſhed merit. Yet it will hardly be thought, at this day, that it could be any diſcredit to him to be cenſured, rivalled, and excelled by Horace.

What I have here put together is only to furniſh the young reader with the proper KEY to Horace's critical works, which generally turn on his own vindication, *againſt the enemies of ſatire — the admirers of Lucilius — and the patrons of looſe and incorrect compoſition.*

In managing theſe ſeveral topics, he has found means to introduce a great deal of exquiſite criticiſm. And though his ſcattered obſervations go but a little way towards making up a complete critical ſyſtem, yet they are ſo *luminous*, as the French ſpeak, that is, they are ſo replete with good ſenſe, and extend ſo much farther than to the caſe to which they are immediately

mediately applied, that they furniſh many of the principles on which ſuch a ſyſtem, if ever it be taken in hand, muſt be conſtructed: And, without carrying matters too far, we may ſafely affirm of theſe *Critical Diſcourſes*, that, next to Ariſtotle's immortal work, they are the moſt valuable remains of antient art upon this ſubject.

The End of the Notes on the Epiſtle to AUGUSTUS.

CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

I. On the idea of universal poetry.

II. On the provinces of dramatic poetry.

III. On poetical imitation.

IV. On the marks of imitation.

VATIBVS ADDERE CALCAR,
VT STVDIO MAIORE PETANT HELICONA VIRENTEM.
Hor.

DISSERTATION I.

ON

THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL POETRY.

WHEN we ſpeak of poetry, as an *art*, we mean *ſuch a way or method of treating a ſubject, as is found moſt pleaſing and delightful to us.* In all other kinds of literary compoſition, pleaſure is ſubordinate to USE: in poetry only, PLEASURE is the end, to which uſe itſelf (however it be, for certain reaſons, always pretended) muſt ſubmit.

This *idea* of the end of poetry is no novel one, but indeed the very ſame which our great philoſopher entertained of it; who gives it as the eſſential note of this part of learning — THAT IT SUBMITS THE SHEWS OF THINGS TO THE DESIRES OF THE MIND: WHEREAS REASON DOTH BUCKLE AND BOW THE MIND UNTO THE

NATURE OF THINGS. For to *gratify the deſires of the mind*, is to PLEASE: *Pleaſure* then, in the idea of Lord Bacon, is the ultimate and appropriate end of poetry; for the ſake of which it accommodates itſelf to *the deſires of the mind*, and doth not (as other kinds of writing, which are under the controul of *reaſon*) *buckle and bow the mind to the nature of things.*

But they, who like a principle the better for ſeeing it in Greek, may take it in the words of an old philoſopher, ERATOSTHENES, who affirmed — ποιητὴν πᾶσαν σοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας, ἃ διδασκαλίας — of which words, the definition given above, is the tranſlation.

This *notion* of the end of poetry, if kept ſteadily in view, will unfold to us all the myſteries of the poetic art. There needs but to evolve the philoſopher's idea, and to apply it, as occaſion ſerves. *The art of poetry* will be, univerſally, THE ART OF PLEASING; and all its *rules*, but ſo many MEANS, which experience finds moſt conducive to that end;

Sic

Sic ANIMIS natum inventumque poëma JUVANDIS.

Ariſtotle has delivered and explained theſe rules, ſo far as they reſpect one ſpecies of poetry, the *dramatic*, or, more properly ſpeaking, the *tragic*: And when ſuch a writer, as he, ſhall do as much by the other ſpecies, then, and not till then, a complete ART OF POETRY will be formed.

I have not the preſumption to think myſelf, in any degree, equal to this arduous taſk: But from the idea of this art, as given above, an ordinary writer may undertake to deduce ſome general concluſions, concerning *Univerſal Poetry*, which ſeem preparatory to thoſe nicer diſquiſitions, concerning its *ſeveral ſorts or ſpecies*.

I. It follows from that IDEA, that it ſhould neglect no advantage, that fairly offers itſelf, of appearing in ſuch a dreſs or mode of language, as is moſt *taking* and agreeable to us. We may expect then, in the language or ſtyle of poetry, a choice of ſuch words as are moſt ſonorous and expreſſive, and ſuch an arrangement of them

them as throws the diſcourſe out of the ordinary and common phraſe of converſation. Novelty and variety are certain ſources of pleaſure: a conſtruction of words, which is not vulgar, is therefore more ſuited to the ends of poetry, than one which we are every day accuſtomed to in familiar diſcourſe. Some manners of placing them are, alſo, more agreeable to the ear, than others: Poetry, then, is ſtudious of theſe, as it would by all means, not manifeſtly abſurd, give pleaſure: And hence a certain muſical cadence, or what we call *Rhythm*, will be affected by the poet.

But, of all the means of adorning and enlivening a diſcourſe by words, which are infinite, and perpetually grow upon us, as our knowledge of the tongue in which we write, and our ſkill in adapting it to the ends of poetry, increaſes, there is none that pleaſes more, than *figurative expreſſion*.

By *figurative expreſſion*, I would be underſtood to mean, here, that which reſpects *the pictures or images of things*. And this ſort of figurative expreſſion is univerſally pleaſing

pleaſing to us, becauſe it tends to impreſs on the mind the moſt diſtinct and vivid conceptions; and truth of repreſentation being of leſs account in this way of compoſition, than the livelineſs of it, poetry, as ſuch, will delight in tropes and figures, and thoſe the moſt ſtrongly and forceably expreſſed. And though the *application* of figures will admit of great variety, according to the nature of the ſubject, and the *management* of them muſt be ſuited to the taſte and apprehenſion of the people to whom they are addreſſed, yet, in ſome way or other, they will find a place in all works of poetry; and they who object to the uſe of them, only ſhew that they are not capable of being pleaſed by this ſort of compoſition, or do, in effect, interdict the thing itſelf.

The antients looked for ſo much of this force and ſpirit of expreſſion in whatever they dignified with the name of *poem*, that Horace tells us it was made a queſtion by ſome, whether comedy were rightly referred to this claſs, becauſe it differed only in point of meaſure from mere proſe.

Idcirco

Idcirco quidam, comoedia necne poema
Eſſet, quaeſivere: quod acer ſpiritus, ac vis,
Nec *verbis*, nec rebus ineſt: niſi quod pede certo
Differt ſermoni, ſermo merus— Sat. l. I. iv.

But they might have ſpared their doubt, or at leaſt have reſolved it, if they had conſidered that comedy adopts as much of this *force and ſpirit of words*, as is conſiſtent with the *nature* and *degree* of that pleaſure, which it pretends to give. For the name of poem will belong to every compoſition, whoſe primary end is to *pleaſe*, provided it be ſo conſtructed as to afford *all* the pleaſure, which its kind or *ſort* will permit.

II. From the idea of the *end* of poetry, it follows, that not only figurative and tropical terms will be employed in it, as *theſe*, by the images they convey, and by the air of novelty which ſuch indirect ways of ſpeaking carry with them, are found moſt delightful to us, but alſo that FICTION, in the largeſt ſenſe of the word, is eſſential to poetry. For its purpoſe is, not to delineate truth ſimply, but to preſent it in the moſt taking forms; not to reflect the

real

real face of things, but to illuſtrate and adorn it; not to repreſent the faireſt objects only, but to repreſent them in the faireſt lights, and to heighten all their beauties up to the poſſibility of their natures; nay, to *outſtrip* nature, and to addreſs itſelf to our wildeſt fancy, rather than to our judgement and cooler ſenſe.

Οὔτ' ἐπιδερκὲς τοῦ ἀνδρός ἐστιν, οὔτ' ἐπακουστὸν,
Οὔτε νόῳ περίληπτον —

as ſings one of the profeſſion [*a*], who ſeems to have underſtood his privileges very well.

For there is ſomething in the mind of man, ſublime and elevated, which prompts it to overlook all obvious and familiar appearances, and to feign to itſelf other and more extraordinary; ſuch as correſpond to the extent of its own powers, and fill out all the faculties and capacities of our ſouls. This reſtleſs and aſpiring diſpoſition, poetry, firſt and principally, would indulge and flatter; and thence takes its name of *divine*, as if ſome power, above

[*a*] Empedocles. See Plutarch, vol. i. p. 15. Par. 1624.

human,

human, conſpired to lift the mind to theſe exalted conceptions.

Hence it comes to paſs, that it deals in apoſtrophes and invocations; that it imperſonates the virtues and vices; peoples all creation with new and living forms; calls up infernal ſpectres to terrify, or brings down celeſtial natures to aſtoniſh, the imagination; aſſembles, combines, or connects its ideas, at pleaſure; in ſhort, prefers not only the agreeable and the graceful, but, as occaſion calls upon her, the vaſt, the incredible, I had almoſt ſaid, the impoſſible, to the obvious truth and nature of things. For all this is but a feeble expreſſion of that magic virtue of poetry, which our Shakeſpeare has ſo forcibly deſcribed in thoſe well-known lines —

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rowling,
> Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth
> to heav'n;
> And, as Imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to ſhape, and gives to aery nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

When

When the received ſyſtem of manners or religion in any country, happens to be ſo conſtituted as to ſuit itſelf in ſome degree to this extravagant turn of the human mind, we may expect that poetry will ſeize it with avidity, will dilate upon it with pleaſure, and take a pride to erect its ſpecious wonders on ſo proper and convenient a ground. Whence it cannot ſeem ſtrange that, of all the forms in which poetry has appeared, that of *pagan fable*, and *gothic romance*, ſhould, in their turns, be found the moſt alluring to the true poet. For, in defect of theſe advantages, he will ever adventure, in ſome ſort, to ſupply their place with others of his own invention; that is, he will mould every ſyſtem, and convert every ſubject, into the moſt amazing and miraculous form.

And this is that I would ſay, at preſent, of theſe two requiſites of univerſal poetry, namely, *that licence of expreſſion*, which we call the *ſtyle* of poetry, and *that licence of repreſentation*, which we call *fiction*. The *ſtyle* is, as it were, the body of poetry; *fiction*, is its ſoul. Having, thus, taken the privilege

privilege of a poet to create a Muſe, we have only now to give her a voice, or more properly to *tune* it, and then ſhe will be in a condition, as one of her favourites ſpeaks, TO RAVISH ALL THE GODS. For

III. It follows from the ſame idea of the *end*, which poetry would accompliſh, that not only Rhythm, but NUMBERS, properly ſo called, is eſſential to it. For this Art undertaking to gratify all thoſe deſires and expectations of pleaſure, that can be reaſonably entertained by us, and there being a capacity in language, the inſtrument it works by, of pleaſing us very highly, not only by the ſenſe and imagery it conveys, but by the ſtructure of words, and ſtill more by the harmonious arrangement of them in metrical ſounds or numbers, and laſtly there being no reaſon in the nature of the thing itſelf why theſe pleaſures ſhould not be united, it follows that poetry will not be that which it profeſſes to be, that is, will not accompliſh its own purpoſe, unleſs it delight the ear with numbers, or, in other words, unleſs it be cloathed in VERSE.

The

The reader, I dare ſay, has hitherto gone along with me, in this deduction: but here, I ſuſpect, we ſhall ſeparate. Yet he will ſtartle the leſs at this concluſion, if he reflect on the origin and firſt application of poetry among all nations.

It is every where of the moſt early growth, preceding every other ſort of compoſition; and being deſtined for the *ear*, that is, to be either ſung, or at leaſt recited, it adapts itſelf, even in its firſt rude eſſays, to that ſenſe of meaſure and proportion in ſounds, which is ſo natural to us. The hearer's attention is the ſooner gained by this means, his entertainment quickened, and his admiration of the performer's art excited. Men are ambitious of pleaſing, and ingenious in refining upon what they obſerve will pleaſe. So that muſical cadences and harmonious ſounds, which nature dictated, are farther ſoftened and improved by art, till poetry become as raviſhing to the ear, as the images, it preſents, are to the imagination. In proceſs of time, what was at firſt the extemporaneous production of genius or paſſion, under

whoſe honour the great Geographer would aſſert, in his criticiſm on Eratoſthenes) frequently *inſtruct us* by a true and faithful repreſentation of things; yet even this inſtructive air is only aſſumed for the ſake of *pleaſing*; which, as the human mind is conſtituted, they could not ſo well do, if they did not inſtruct at all, that is, if *truth* were wholly neglected by them. So that *pleaſure* is ſtill the ultimate end and *ſcope* of the poet's art; and *inſtruction* itſelf is, in his hands, only one of the *means*, by which he would effect it [*b*].

I am the larger on this head, to ſhew that it is not a mere verbal diſpute, as it is commonly thought, whether poems ſhould be written in verſe, or no. Men may include, or not include, the idea of metre in their complex idea of what they call a *Poem*. What I contend for, is, that *metre*, as an inſtrument of *pleaſing*, is eſſential to every work of poetic art, and would therefore enter into ſuch idea, if men judged of poetry according to its confeſſed *nature and end*.

[*b*] See STRABO, l. i. p. 15. Par. 1620.

Whence

Whence it may ſeem a little ſtrange, that my Lord Bacon ſhould ſpeak of *poeſy as a part of learning in meaſure of words* FOR THE MOST PART *reſtrained*; when his own notion, as we have ſeen above, was, that the eſſence of poetry conſiſted *in ſubmitting the ſhews of things to the deſires of the mind.* For theſe *ſhews of things* could only be exhibited to the mind through the *medium of words*: and it is juſt as natural for the mind to deſire that theſe words ſhould be *harmonious*, as that the images, conveyed in them, ſhould be *illuſtrious*; there being a capacity in the mind of being delighted through its organ, the *ear*, as well as through its power, or faculty of *imagination*. And the wonder is the greater, becauſe the great philoſopher himſelf was aware of *the agreement and conſort which poetry hath with muſic*, as well as *with man's nature and pleaſure*, that is, with the pleaſure which naturally reſults from gratifying the imagination. So that, to be conſiſtent with himſelf, he ſhould, methinks, have ſaid—*that poeſy was a part of learning in meaſure of words*

become a ſtanding law of the tragic ſtage. For this, as every other poem, being calculated and deſigned properly and ultimately to *pleaſe*, whatever contributes to produce that end moſt perfectly, all circumſtances taken into the account, muſt be thought of the nature or eſſence of the kind.

But, without carrying matters ſo far, let us confine our attention to metre, or what we call *verſe*. This muſt be eſſential to every work bearing the name of *poem*, not, becauſe we are only accuſtomed to call works written in verſe, *poems*, but becauſe a work, which profeſſes to pleaſe us by every poſſible and proper method, and yet does not give us this pleaſure, which it is in its power, and is no way improper for it, to give, muſt ſo far fall ſhort of fulfilling its own engagements to us; that is, it has not all thoſe qualities which we have a right to expect in a work of literary art, of which *pleaſure* is the ultimate *end*.

To explain myſelf by an obvious inſtance. Hiſtory undertakes to INSTRUCT us in the tranſactions of paſt times. If it anſwer

ſwer this purpoſe, it does all that is of *its nature*; and, if it find means to *pleaſe* us, beſides, by the harmony of its ſtyle, and vivacity of its narration, all this is to be accounted as pure gain: if it inſtructed ONLY, by the truth of its reports, and the perſpicuity of its method, it would fully attain its *end*. Poetry, on the other hand, undertakes to PLEASE. If it employ all its powers to this purpoſe, it effects all that is of *its nature*: if it ſerve, beſides, to inform or inſtruct us, by the truths it conveys, and by the precepts or examples it inculcates, this ſervice may rather be accepted, than required by us: if it pleaſed ONLY, by its ingenious fictions, and harmonious ſtructure, it would diſcharge its office, and anſwer its *end*.

In this ſenſe, the famous ſaying of Eratoſthenes, quoted above—*that the poet's aim is to pleaſe, not to inſtruct*—is to be underſtood: nor does it appear, what reaſon Strabo could have to take offence at it; however it might be miſapplied, as he tells us it was, by that writer. For, though the poets, no doubt (and eſpecially THE POET,

the conduct of a *natural ear*, becomes the labour of the cloſet, and is conducted by artificial rules; yet ſtill, with a ſecret reference to the *ſenſe* of hearing, and to that acceptation which melodious ſounds meet with in the recital of expreſſive words.

Even the proſe-writer (when the art is enough advanced to produce proſe) having been accuſtomed to have his ear conſulted and gratified by the poet, catches inſenſibly the ſame harmonious affection, tunes his ſentences and periods to ſome agreement with ſong, and tranſfers into his cooleſt narrative, or graveſt inſtruction, ſomething of that muſic, with which his ear vibrates from poetic impreſſions.

In ſhort, he leaves meaſured and determinate numbers, that is, METRE, to the poet, who is to pleaſe up to the height of his faculties, and the nature of his work; and only reſerves to himſelf, whoſe purpoſe of giving pleaſure is ſubordinate to another end, the looſer muſical meaſure, or what we call RHYTHMICAL PROSE.

The reaſon appears, from this deduction, why *all* poetry aſpires to pleaſe by melodious

dious numbers. To *ſome* ſpecies it is thought more eſſential, than to others, becauſe thoſe ſpecies continue to be *ſung*, that is, are more immediately addreſſed to the ear; and becauſe they continue to be ſung in concert with *muſical inſtruments*, by which the ear is ſtill more indulged. It happened in antient Greece, that even tragedy retained this accompaniment of muſical inſtruments, through all its ſtages, and even in its moſt improved ſtate. Whence Ariſtotle includes *muſic*, properly ſo called, as well as *Rhythm* and *Metre*, in his idea of the tragic poem. He did this, becauſe he found the drama of his country, OMNIBUS NUMERIS ABSOLUTUM, I mean in poſſeſſion of all the advantages which could reſult from the union of *rhythmical*, *metrical*, and *muſical* ſounds. Modern tragedy has relinquiſhed part of theſe: yet ſtill, if it be true that this poem be more pleaſing by the addition of the *muſical* art, and there be nothing in the nature of the compoſition which forbids the uſe of it, I know not why Ariſtotle's idea ſhould not be adopted, and his precept

ALWAYS *reſtrained*; ſuch *poeſy*, as, through the idleneſs or negligence of writers, is not ſo reſtrained, not agreeing to his own idea of *this part of learning* [*c*].

Theſe reflexions will afford a proper ſolution of that queſtion, which has been agitated by the critics, "Whether a work "of fiction and imagination (ſuch as that "of the archbiſhop of Cambray, for in-"ſtance) conducted, in other reſpects, ac-"cording to the rules of the epic poem, but "written in proſe, may deſerve the name of "POEM, or not." For, though it be frivolous indeed to diſpute about names, yet from what has been ſaid it appears, that if metre be not incongruous to the nature of an epic compoſition, and it afford a pleaſure which is not to be found in mere proſe, metre is, for that reaſon, eſſential to this mode of writing; which is only ſaying in other words, that an epic compoſition, to give all the pleaſure which it is capable of giving, muſt be written in *verſe*.

[*c*] ADV. OF LEARNING, vol. i. p. 50. Dr Birch's Ed. 1765.

But,

But, ſecondly, this concluſion, I think, extends farther than to ſuch works as aſpire to the name of *epic*. For inſtance, what are we to think of thoſe *novels* or *romances*, as they are called, that is, fables conſtructed on ſome private and familiar ſubject, which have been ſo current, of late, through all Europe? As they propoſe *pleaſure* for their end, and proſecute it, beſides, in the way of *fiction*, though without metrical numbers, and generally, indeed, in harſh and rugged proſe, one eaſily ſees what their pretenſions are, and under what idea they are ambitious to be received. Yet, as they are wholly deſtitute of meaſured ſounds (to ſay nothing of their other numberleſs defects) they can, at moſt, be conſidered but as haſty, imperfect, and abortive poems; whether ſpawned from the dramatic, or narrative ſpecies, it may be hard to ſay —

Unfiniſh'd things, one knows not what to call,
Their generation's ſo equivocal.

However, ſuch as they are, theſe *novelties* have been generally well received: *Some*, for the real merit of their execution; *Others*,

ful and harmonious than the French, may afford all the melody of ſound which is expected in ſome ſorts of poetry, by its *varied pauſe*, and *quantity* only; while in other ſorts, which are more ſollicitous to pleaſe the ear, and where ſuch ſollicitude, if taken notice of by the reader or hearer, is not reſented, it may be proper, or rather it becomes a law of the Engliſh and Italian poetry, to adopt *rhyme*. Thus, our tragedies are uſually compoſed in blank verſe: but our epic and lyric compoſitions are found moſt pleaſing, when cloathed in rhyme. Milton, I know, it will be ſaid, is an exception: But, if we ſet aſide ſome learned perſons, who have ſuffered themſelves to be too eaſily prejudiced by their admiration of the Greek and Latin languages, and ſtill more, perhaps, by the prevailing notion of the monkiſh or gothic original of rhymed verſe, all other readers, if left to themſelves, would, I dare ſay, be more delighted with this poet, if, beſides his various pauſe, and meaſured quantity, he had enriched his numbers, with *rhyme*. So that his love of liberty, the ruling paſ-

ſion

ſion of his heart, perhaps tranſported him too far, when he choſe to follow the example ſet him by one or two writers of *prime note* (to uſe his own eulogium), rather than comply with the regular and prevailing practice of his favoured Italy, which firſt and principally, as our beſt rhymiſt ſings,

> With pauſes, cadence, and well-vowell'd words,
> And all the graces a good ear affords,
> MADE RHYME AN ART—

Our comedy, indeed, is generally written in *proſe*; but through the idleneſs, or ill taſte, of our writers, rather than from any other juſt cauſe. For, though rhyme be not neceſſary, or rather would be improper, in the comedy of our language, which can ſupport itſelf in poetic numbers, without the diligence of rhyme; yet ſome ſort of metre is requiſite in this humbler ſpecies of poem; otherwiſe, it will not contribute all that is within its power and province, to *pleaſe*. And the particular metre, proper for this ſpecies, is not far to ſeek. For it can plainly be no other than a careleſs and looſer Iambic, ſuch as our language naturally

are ſtudiouſly avoided by good writers; while in others, as in all the modern ones, where theſe conſonances are leſs frequent, and where the quantity of ſyllables is not ſo diſtinctly marked as, of itſelf, to afford an harmonious meaſure and muſical variety, there it is of neceſſity that poets have had recourſe to *Rhyme*; or to ſome other expedient of the like nature, ſuch as the *Alliteration*, for inſtance; which is only another way of delighting the ear by iterated ſound, and may be defined, *the conſonance of initial letters*, as rhyme is, the *conſonance of final ſyllables*. All this, I ſay, is of neceſſity, becauſe what we call verſes in ſuch languages will be otherwiſe untuneful, and will not ſtrike the ear with that vivacity, which is requiſite to put a ſenſible difference between poetic numbers and meaſured proſe.

In ſhort, no method of gratifying the ear by *meaſured ſound*, which experience has found pleaſing, is to be neglected by the poet: and although, from the different ſtructure and genius of languages, theſe methods will be different, the ſtudious application

application of ſuch methods, as each particular language allows, becomes a neceſſary part of his office. He will only cultivate thoſe methods moſt, which tend to produce, in a given language, the moſt harmonious ſtructure or meaſure, of which it is capable.

Hence it comes to paſs, that the poetry of ſome modern languages cannot ſo much as ſubſiſt, without rhyme: In others, it is only embelliſhed by it. Of the *former* ſort is the French, which therefore adopts, and with good reaſon, rhymed verſe, not in tragedy only, but in comedy: And though foreigners, who have a language differently conſtructed, are apt to treat this obſervance of rhyme as an idle affectation, yet it is but juſt to allow that the French themſelves are the moſt competent judges of the natural defect of their own tongue, and the likelieſt to perceive by what management ſuch defect is beſt remedied or concealed.

In the *latter* claſs of languages, whoſe poetry is only embelliſhed by the uſe of rhyme, we may reckon the Italian and the Engliſh: which being naturally more tuneful

Others, for their amuſing ſubjects; *All* of them, for the gratification they afford, or promiſe at leaſt, to a vitiated, palled, and ſickly imagination — that laſt diſeaſe of learned minds, and ſure prognoſtic of expiring Letters. But whatever may be the temporary ſucceſs of theſe things (for they vaniſh as faſt as they are produced, and are produced as ſoon as they are conceived) good ſenſe will acknowledge no work of art but ſuch as is compoſed according to the laws of its *kind*. Theſe KINDS, as arbitrary things as we account them (for I neither forget nor diſpute what our beſt philoſophy teaches concerning *kinds* and *ſorts)*, have yet ſo far their foundation in nature and the reaſon of things, that it will not be allowed us to multiply, or vary them, at pleaſure. We may, indeed, mix and confound them, if we will (for there is a ſort of literary luxury, which would engroſs all pleaſures at once, even ſuch as are contradictory to each other), or, in our rage for inceſſant gratification, we may take up with half-formed pleaſures, ſuch as come firſt to hand, and may

may be adminiſtered by any body: But true taſte requires chaſte, ſevere, and ſimple pleaſures; and true genius will only be concerned in adminiſtering ſuch.

Laſtly, on the ſame principle on which we have decided on theſe queſtions concerning the *abſolute merits* of poems in proſe, in *all* languages, we may, alſo, determine another, which has been put concerning the *comparative merits* of RHYMED, and what is called BLANK verſe, in our *own*, and the other *modern* languages.

Critics and antiquaries have been ſollicitous to find out who were the inventors of rhyme, which ſome fetch from the Monks, ſome from the Goths, and others from the Arabians: whereas, the truth ſeems to be, that *rhyme*, or the conſonance of final ſyllables, occurring at ſtated intervals, is the dictate of nature, or, as we may ſay, an appeal to the *ear*, in all languages, and in ſome degree pleaſing in all. The difference is, that, in ſome languages, theſe conſonances are apt of themſelves to occur ſo often that they rather nauſeate, than pleaſe, and ſo, inſtead of being affected,

are

naturally runs into, even in converſation, and of which we are not without examples, in our old and beſt writers for the comic ſtage. But it is not wonderful that thoſe critics, who take offence at Engliſh epic poems in *rhyme*, becauſe the Greek and Latin only obſerved *quantity*, ſhould require Engliſh comedies to be written in *proſe*, though the Greek and Latin comedies were compoſed in *verſe*. For the ill application of examples, and the neglect of them, may be well enough expected from the ſame men, ſince it does not appear that their judgment was employed, or the reaſon of the thing attended to, in either inſtance.

And thus much for the idea of Universal Poetry. It is the art of treating any ſubject in *ſuch* a way as is found moſt delightful to us; that is, in an ornamented and numerous style — in the way of fiction — and in verse. Whatever deſerves the name of poem muſt unite theſe three properties; only in different degrees of each, according to its nature. For the art of every *kind* of poetry

poetry is only this general art ſo modified as the *nature* of each, that is, its more immediate and ſubordinate end, may reſpectively require.

We are now, then, at the well-head of the poetic art; and they who drink deeply of this ſpring, will be beſt qualified to perform the reſt. But all heads are not equal to theſe copious draughts; and, beſides, I hear the ſober reader admoniſhing me long ſince —

Luſiſti ſatis atque BIBISTI;
Tempus abire tibi eſt, ne POTUM LARGIUS AEQUO
Rideat, et pulſet laſciva decentius AETAS.

THURCASTON,
MDCCLXV.

DISSERTATION II.

ON

THE PROVINCES OF THE DRAMA.

IN the former Eſſay, I gave an idea, or ſlight ſketch, of *Univerſal Poetry*. In this, I attempt to deduce the laws of one of its kinds, the *Dramatic*, under all its forms. And I engage in this taſk, the rather, becauſe, though much has been ſaid on the ſubject of the drama, writers ſeem not to have taken ſufficient pains to diſtinguiſh, with exactneſs, its ſeveral ſpecies.

I deduce the laws of this poem, as I did thoſe of poetry at large, from the conſideration of its *end*: not the general end of poetry, which alone was proper to be conſidered in the former caſe, but the proximate end of this kind. For from theſe ends, in ſubordination to that, which governs the genus, or which all poetry, as

ſuch, deſigns and proſecutes, are the peculiar rules and maxims of each ſpecies to be derived.

THE PURPOSE OF THE DRAMA is, univerſally, "to repreſent human life in the "way of *action*." But as ſuch repreſentation is made for ſeparate and diſtinct ENDS, it is, further, diſtinguiſhed into different *ſpecies*, which we know by the names of TRAGEDY, COMEDY, and FARCE.

By TRAGEDY, then, I mean that ſpecies of dramatic repreſentation, whoſe *end* is "*to excite the paſſions of* PITY *and* TERROR, *and perhaps ſome others, nearly allied to them.*"

By COMEDY *that*, which propoſeth, for the *ends* of its repreſentation, "*the ſenſation of pleaſure ariſing from a view of the truth of* CHARACTERS, *more eſpecially their ſpecific differences.*"

By FARCE I underſtand that ſpecies of the drama, "*whoſe ſole aim and tendency is to excite* LAUGHTER."

The idea of theſe *three ſpecies* being then propoſed, let us now ſee, what concluſions may be drawn from it. And chiefly in reſpect

reſpect of *Tragedy* and *Comedy*, which are moſt important. For as to what concerns the province of *Farce*, this will be eaſily underſtood, when the character of the other two is once fettled.

CHAP. I.

ON THE PROVINCES OF TRAGEDY AND COMEDY.

FROM the idea of theſe two ſpecies, as given above, the following concluſions, about the *nature* of each are immediately deducible.

1. If the proper end of TRAGEDY be to *affect*, it follows, "that *actions*, not cha-"racters, are the chief object of its repre-"ſentations." For that which *affects* us moſt in the view of human life is the obſervation of thoſe ſignal circumſtances of *felicity or diſtreſs*, which occur in the fortunes of men. But *felicity* and *diſtreſs*, as the great critic takes notice, depend on *action*; κατὰ τὰς πράξεις, εὐδαίμονες, ἢ τἀναντία. They are then the calamitous *events*, or fortunate *iſſues* in human action, which ſtir up the ſtronger *affections*, and agitate the

heart with *Paſſion*. The *manners* are not, indeed, to be neglected. But they become an inferior conſideration in the views of the tragic poet, and are exhibited only for the ſake of making the *action* more proper to intereſt us. Thus our *joy* on the *happy eataſtrophe* of the fable, depends, in a good degree, on the *virtuous character* of the agent; as, on the other hand, we ſympathize more ſtrongly with him, on a *diſtreſsful iſſue*. The *manners* of the ſeveral perſons in the drama muſt, alſo, be ſignified, that the *action*, which in many caſes will be determined by them, may appear to be carried on with *truth and probability*. Hence every thing paſſing before us, as we are accuſtomed to ſee it in real life, we enter more warmly into their intereſts, as forgetting, that we are attentive to a *fictitious ſcene*. And, beſides, from knowing the perſonal *good or ill qualities* of the agents, we learn to anticipate their future *felicity* or *miſery*, which gives increaſe to the *paſſion* in either caſe. Our acquaintance with IAGO's *cloſe villainy* makes us tremble for Othello and Deſdemona beforehand: and

HAMLET's

HAMLET's *filial piety and intrepid daring* occaſion the audience ſecretly to exult in the *expectation* of ſome ſucceſsful vengeance to be inflicted on the inceſtuous murderers.

2. For the ſame reaſon as tragedy takes for its *object* the actions of men, it, alſo, prefers, or rather confines itſelf to, ſuch actions, as are moſt *important*. Which is only ſaying, that as it intends to *intereſt*, it, of courſe, chuſes the repreſentation of thoſe *events*, which are moſt *intereſting*.

And this ſhews the defect of modern tragedy, in turning ſo conſtantly as it does, on *love ſubjects*; the effect of this practice is, that, excepting only the rank of the actors (which indeed, as will be ſeen preſently, is of conſiderable importance), the reſt is below the dignity of this drama. For the *action*, when ſtripped of its accidental ornaments and reduced to the *eſſential fact*, is nothing more than what might as well have paſſed in a cottage, as a king's palace. The Greek poets ſhould be our guides here, who take the very grandeſt events in their ſtory to ennoble their tragedy.

dy. Whence it comes to paſs that the *action*, having an eſſential dignity, is always *intereſting*, and by the ſimpleſt management of the poet becomes in a ſupreme degree, *pathetic*.

3. On the ſame account, the *perſons*, whoſe actions Tragedy would exhibit to us, muſt be of *principal rank and dignity*. For the actions of theſe are, both in *themſelves* and in their *conſequences*, moſt fitted to excite paſſion. The *diſtreſſes* of private and inferior perſons will, no doubt, *affect* us greatly; and we may give the name of *tragedies*, if we pleaſe, to dramatic repreſentations of them: as, in fact, we have ſeveral applauded pieces of this kind. Nay, it may ſeem, that the fortunes of private men, as more nearly reſembling *thoſe* of the generality, ſhould be moſt *affecting*. But this circumſtance in no degree makes amends for the loſs of other and much greater *advantages*. For, whatever be the *unhappy incidents* in the ſtory of private men, it is certain, they muſt take faſter hold of the *imagination*, and, of courſe, impreſs the heart more forcibly, when related

lated of the higher characters in life.

Τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ἀξιοπενθῆς
Φήμα μᾶλλον κατέχει.

EURIP. HIPP. 1484.

Kings, Heroes, Statesmen, and other persons of great and public authority, influence by their *ill-fortune* the whole community, to which they belong. The attention is rouzed, and all our faculties take an alarm, at the apprehension of such extensive and important wretchedness. And, besides, if we regard the *event* itself, without an eye to its *effects*, there is still the widest difference between the two cases. Those ideas of awe and veneration, which opinion throws round the persons of princes, make us esteem the very *same event* in their fortunes, as more august and emphatical, than in the fortunes of private men. In the *one*, it is ordinary and familiar to our conceptions; it is singular and surprizing, in the *other*. The fall of a *cottage*, by the accidents of time and weather, is almost unheeded; while the ruin of a *tower*, which the neighbourhood hath gazed at, for ages,

with

with admiration, ſtrikes all obſervers with concern. So that, if we chuſe to continue the abſurdity, taken notice of in the laſt article, of planning *unimportant action* in our tragedy, we ſhould, at leaſt, take care to give it this foreign and extrinſic *importance* of great *actors*: Yet our paſſion for the *familiar* goes ſo far, that we have tragedies, not only of private action, but of *private perſons*; and ſo have well nigh annihilated the nobleſt of the two dramas amongſt us. On the whole it appears, that as the proper object of tragedy is *action*, ſo it is *important* action, and therefore more eſpecially the action of *great and illuſtrious men*. Each of theſe concluſions is the direct conſequence of our idea of its *end*.

The reverſe of all this holds true of COMEDY. For,

1. Comedy, by the very terms of the definition, is converſant about *characters*. And, if we obſerve, that which creates the pleaſure we find in contemplating the lives of men, conſidered as diſtinct from the *intereſt* we take in their fortunes, is the contemplation

templation of their manners and humours. Their *actions*, when they are not of that ſort, which ſeizes our admiration, or catches the affections, are no otherwiſe conſidered by us, than as they are ſenſible indications of the internal ſentiment and diſpoſition. Our intimate conſciouſneſs of the ſeveral turns and windings of our nature, makes us attend to theſe pictures of human life with an incredible curioſity. And herein the proper entertainment, which comic repreſentation, *as ſuch*, adminiſters to the mind, conſiſts. By turning the thought on *event and action*, this entertainment is proportionably leſſened; that is, the *end* of comedy is leſs perfectly attained [*d*].

[*d*] Ariſtotle was of the ſame mind, as appears from his definition of comedy, which, ſays he, is ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΥΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ. [κ. ε.] that is, *the imitation of characters*, whatever be the diſtinct meaning of the term φαυλότεροι. It is true, this critic, in his account of the origin of tragedy and comedy, makes them both the imitations of ACTIONS. Οἱ μὲν σεμνότεροι ΤΑΣ ΚΑΛΑΣ ἐμιμοῦντο ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι ΤΑΣ τῶν φαύλων. [κ. δ.] Yet, even here, the expreſſion is ſo put, as if he had been conſcious that *perſons*, not *actions*, were the direct object of comedy. And the quotation, now alledged from another place, where

But-

But here, again, though *action* be not the main object of comedy, yet it is not to be neglected, any more than *character* in tragedy, but comes in as an useful acceſſary, or aſſiſtant to it. For the *manners of men* only ſhew themſelves, or ſhew themſelves moſt uſually, in *action*. It is this, which fetches out the latent ſtrokes of *character*, and renders the inward *temper and diſpoſition* the object of ſenſe. *Probable circumſtances* are then imagined, and a certain *train of action* contrived, to evidence the *internal qualities*. There is no *other*, or no *probable* way, but this, of bringing us acquainted with them. Again; by engaging his *characters* in a courſe of action and the purſuit of ſome *end*, the comic poet leaves them to expreſs themſelves undiſguiſedly, and *without deſign*; in which the eſſence of *humour* conſiſts.

Add to this, that when the *fable* is ſo contrived as to attach the mind, we very naturally fancy ourſelves preſent at a courſe of *living* action. And this illuſion quickens

a definition is given more in form, ſhews, that this was, in effect, his ſentiment.

our attention to the *characters*, which no longer appear to us creatures of the poet's fiction, but actors in real life.

These observations concerning the *moderated* use of action in comedy, instruct us what to think "of those intricate Spanish "plots, which have been in use, and have "taken both with us and some French "writers for the stage. The truth is, "they have hindered very much the main "end of comedy. For when these un-"natural plots are used, the mind is not "only entirely *drawn off* from the cha-"racters by those surprizing turns and re-"volutions; but characters have no oppor-"tunity even of being *called out* and dis-"playing themselves. For the actors of all "characters *succeed* and are *embarrassed* "alike, when the instruments for carrying "on designs are only *perplexed apartments*, "*dark entries*, *disguised habits*, and *ladders* "*of ropes*. The comic plot is, and must, "indeed, be carried on by *deceipt*. The "Spanish scene does it by deceiving the "man *through his senses*: Terence and Mo-"liere, by deceiving him *through his passions*

"*and*

"*and affections.* This is the right method: "for the character is *not* called out under "the *firſt* ſpecies of deceipt: under the "*ſecond*, the character does *all.*"

2. As *character*, not *action*, is the object of comedy; ſo the *characters* it paints muſt not be of *ſingular and illuſtrious note*, either for their *virtues* or *vices.* The reaſon is, that ſuch characters take too faſt hold of the *affections*, and ſo call off the mind from adverting to the *truth* of the manners; that is, from receiving the *pleaſure*, which this poem *intends.* Our *ſenſe of imitation* is that to which the comic poet addreſſes himſelf; but ſuch pictures of *eminent worth* or *villainy* ſeize upon the *moral ſenſe*; and by raiſing the ſtrong correſpondent paſſions of *admiration* and *abhorrence*, turn us aſide from contemplating the *imitation itſelf.* And,

3. For a like cauſe, comedy confines its views to the characters of *private and inferior perſons.* For the *truth of character*, which is the ſpring of *humour*, being neceſſarily, as was obſerved, to be ſhewn through the medium of *action*, and the

actions

actions of the great being uſually ſuch as excite the *pathos*, it follows of courſe, that theſe cannot, with propriety, be made the actors in comedy. Perſons of high and public life, if they are drawn agreeably to our accuſtomed ideas of them, muſt be employed in ſuch a *courſe of action*, as arreſts the attention, or intereſts the paſſions; and either way it diverts the mind from obſerving the *truth* of manners, that is, it prevents the attainment of the ſpecific *end*, which comedy deſigns.

And if the reaſon, here given, be ſufficient to exclude the *higher characters* in life from this *drama*, even where the repreſentation is intended to be *ſerious*, we ſhall find it ſtill more improper to expoſe them in any pleaſant or ridiculous light. It is true, the follies and foibles of the great will apparently take an eaſier ridicule by repreſentation, than thoſe of their inferiors. And this it was, which miſled the celebrated P. CORNEILLE into the opinion, *that the actions of the great, and even of kings themſelves, provided they be of the ridiculous kind, are as fit objects of comedy, as*

any

any other. But he did not reflect, that the *actions* of the great being uſually ſuch, as intereſt the intire community, at leaſt ſcarcely any other falling beneath vulgar notice; and the higher *characters* being rarely ſeen or contemplated by the people but with reverence, hence it is, that in fact, *the repreſentation of high life* cannot, without offence to probability, be made *ridiculous*, or conſequently be admitted into comedy under this view. And therefore PLAUTUS, when he thought fit to introduce theſe *reverend perſonages* on the comic ſtage in his AMPHITRUO, though he employed them in no very ſerious matters, was yet obliged to apologize for this impropriety in calling his play a *Tragi-comedy.* What he ſays upon the occaſion, though delivered with an air of pleaſantry, is, according to the laws of juſt criticiſm:

Faciam ut commiſta ſit TRAGICO-COMOEDIA.
Nam me perpetuo facere, ut ſit Comoedia,
REGES QUO VENIANT ET DII, *non par arbitror.*
Quid igitur? quoniam hic SERVOS QUOQUE PARTES HABET,
Faciam ſit, proinde ut dixi, TRAGICO-COMEDIA.
PROL. IN AMPHIT.

And

And now, taking the *idea* of the *two dramas*, as here opened, along with us, we ſhall be able to give an account of ſeveral attributes, *common* to both, or which further *characterize* each of them. And,

1. *A plot will be required in both.* For the end of tragedy being to excite the affections *by* action; and the end of comedy, to manifeſt the truth of character *through* it; an artful *conſtitution of the Fable* is required to do juſtice both to the one and the other. It ſerves to bring out the *paſſion*, and to produce *humour*. And thus the general form or ſtructure of the two dramas will be one and the ſame.

2. More particularly, *an unity and even ſimplicity in the conduct of the fable* [e] *is a*

[e] The neglect of this is one of the greateſt defects in the *modern drama*; which in nothing falls ſo much ſhort of the perfection of the Greek ſcene as in this want of ſimplicity in the conſtruction of its fable. The good ſenſe of the author of the *Hiſtory of the Italian Theatre* (who, though a mere player, appears to have had juſter notions of the drama, than the generality of even profeſſed critics) was ſenſibly ſtruck with this difference in *tragedy*. "Quant à "l'unité d'action," ſays he, "je trouve un grande dif- "ference entre les tragedies Grecques et les trage-

perfection in each. For the courſe of the *affections* is diverted and weakened by the intervention of what we call a *double plot*; and even by a multiplicity of *ſubordinate events*, though tending to a common *end*; and of *perſons*, though all of them, ſome way, concerned in promoting it. The like conſideration ſhews the obſervance of this *rule* to be eſſential to juſt comedy. For when the *attention* is ſplit on ſo many interfering objects, we are not at leiſure to obſerve, nor do we ſo fully enter into, the *truth of repreſentation* in any of them; the *ſenſe* of *humour*, as of the *pathos*, depending very much on the continued and undiverted operation of its *object* upon us.

3. The two dramas agree, alſo, in this circumſtance; that the *manners* of the perſons exhibited ſhould be *imperfect*. An abſolutely *good*, or an abſolutely *bad*, cha-

"dies Françoiſes; j'apperçois toûjours aiſément "l'action des tragedies Grecques, et je ne la perds "point de vûe; mais dans les tragedies Françoiſes, "j'avoüe, que j'ai ſouvent bien de la peine à demêler "l'action des epiſodes, dont elle eſt chargée." [*Hiſt. du Theatre Italien, par* Louis Riccoboni, p. 293. *Paris*, 1728.]

racter

racter is foreign to the purpoſe of each. And the reaſon is, 1. That ſuch a repreſentation is *improbable*. And *probability* conſtitutes, as we have ſeen, the very eſſence of comedy; and is the *medium*, through which tragedy is enabled moſt powerfully to affect us. 2. Such *characters* are improper to *comedy*, becauſe, as was hinted above, they turn the attention aſide from contemplating the *expreſſion* of them, which we call *humour*. And they are not leſs unſuited to *tragedy*, becauſe though they make a forcible impreſſion on the mind, yet, as Ariſtotle well obſerves, they do not produce the paſſions of *pity and terror*; that is, their *impreſſions* are not of the nature of that *pathos*, by which tragedy works its purpoſe. [z. ry].

There are, likewiſe, ſome peculiarities, which diſtinguiſh the two dramas. And

1. *Though a plot be neceſſary to produce* humour, *as well as the pathos*; *yet a* good plot *is not ſo eſſential to comedy, as tragedy.* For the pathos is the reſult of the *entire action*, that is, of all the circumſtances of the ſtory taken together, and conſpiring, by

a probable tendency, to a completion in the *event*. A failure in the juſt arrangement and diſpoſition of the parts may, then, affect what is of the eſſence of this drama. On the contrary, *humour*, though brought out by *action*, is not the effect of the *whole*, but may be diſtinctly evidenced in a *ſingle ſcene*; as may be eminently illuſtrated in the two comedies of Fletcher, called *The Little French Lawyer*, and *The Spaniſh Curate*. The nice contexture of the fable, therefore, though it may give a *pleaſure* of another kind, is not ſo immediately required to the production of *that* pleaſure, which the nature of comedy demands. Much leſs is there occaſion for that labour and ingenuity of contrivance, which is ſeen in the intricacy of the Spaniſh fable. Yet this is the taſte of our comedy. Our writers are all for plot and intrigue; and never appear ſo well ſatisfied with themſelves as when, to ſpeak in their own phraſe, they contrive to have a great deal of *buſineſs* on their hands. Indeed they have reaſon. For it hides their inability to colour *manners*,

ners, which is the proper but much harder province of true comedy.

2. *Tragedy ſucceeds beſt, when the ſubject is* real; *comedy, when it is* feigned. What would this ſay, but that tragedy, turning our attention principally on the *action repreſented*, finds means to *intereſt* us more ſtrongly on the perſuaſion of its being taken from *actual life?* While comedy, on the other hand, can neglect theſe ſcrupulous meaſures of *probability*, as intent only on exhibiting *characters*; for which purpoſe an *invented ſtory* will ſerve much better. The reaſon is, *real action* does not ordinarily afford variety of incidents enough to ſhew the *character* fully: *feigned action* may.

And this difference, we may obſerve, explains the reaſon why tragedies are often formed on the moſt *trite and vulgar ſubjects*, whereas a *new* ſubject is generally demanded in comedy. The *reality* of the ſtory being of ſo much conſequence to intereſt the affections, the more *known* it is, the fitter for the poet's purpoſe. But a *feigned* ſtory having been found more convenient

for the diſplay of characters, it grew into a rule that the ſtory ſhould be always *new*. This diſadvantage on the ſide of the comic poet is taken notice of in thoſe verſes of Antiphanes, or rather, as Caſaubon conjectures, of *Ariſtophanes*, in a play of his, intitled, Ποίησις. The reaſon of this difference now appears.

—Μακάριόν ἐσιν ἡ τραγῳδία
Ποίημα καλὰ πάντ'. εἴγε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι
Ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσὶν ἐγνωρισμένοι,
Πρὶν καί τιν' εἰπεῖν, ὡς ὑπομνῆσαι μόνον
Δεῖ τὸν ποιητήν· Οἰδίπων γὰρ ἄν γε φῶ,
Τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντ' ἴσασιν. Ὁ παῖς Λάϊος
Μήτηρ Ἰοκάςη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες, τίνες·
Τὶ πείσεθ' ἕτος, τί πεποίηκεν . . . .
Ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' οὐκ ἔσιν· ἀλλὰ πάνθ' δεῖ
Εὑρεῖν ὀνόματα καινὰ, τὰ διωκημένα
Πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν καταςροφὴν,
Τὴν ἔσβολήν. ἂν ἕν τι τέτων παραλίπῃ,
Χρέμης τις, ἢ Φειδων τις ἐκσυρίττεται,
Πηλεῖ δὲ ταῦτ' ἔξεσι καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν.

One ſees, then, the reaſon why Tragedy prefers real *ſubjects*, and even old ones; and,

and, on the contrary, why comedy delights in feigned ſubjects, and new.

The ſame genius in the two dramas is obſervable, in their draught of *characters*. Comedy makes all its Characters *general*; Tragedy, *particular*. The *Avare* of Moliere is not ſo properly the picture of a *covetous man*, as of *covetouſneſs* itſelf. Racine's *Nero*, on the other hand, is not a picture of *cruelty*, but of a *cruel man*.

Yet here it will be proper to guard againſt two miſtakes, which the principles now delivered may be thought to countenance.

The *firſt* is with regard to *tragic* characters, which I ſay are *particular*. My meaning is, they are *more* particular than thoſe of comedy. That is, the *end* of tragedy does not require or permit the poet to draw together ſo many of thoſe characteriſtic circumſtances which ſhew the manners, as Comedy. For, in the former of theſe dramas, no more of *character* is ſhewn, than what the courſe of the action neceſſarily calls forth. Whereas, all or moſt of the features, by which it is uſually

diſtinguiſhed, are ſought out and induſtriouſly diſplayed in the *latter*.

The caſe is much the ſame as in *portrait painting*; where, if a great maſter be required to draw a *particular face*, he gives the very lineaments he finds in it; yet ſo far reſembling to what he obſerves of the ſame turn in other faces, as not to affect any minute circumſtance of peculiarity. But if the ſame artiſt were to deſign a *head* in general, he would aſſemble together all the cuſtomary traits and features, any where obſervable through the ſpecies, which ſhould beſt expreſs the idea, whatever it was, he had conceived in his own mind, and wanted to exhibit in the picture.

There is much the ſame difference between the two ſorts of *dramatic* portraits. Whence it appears that in calling the tragic character *particular*, I ſuppoſe it only *leſs repreſentative* of the kind than the comic; not that the draught of ſo much character as it is concerned to repreſent ſhould not be *general:* the contrary of which I have aſſerted and explained at large elſeweere [*Notes on the A. P.* 317.]

Next,

Next, I have ſaid, the characters of juſt comedy are *general*. And this I explain by the inſtance of the *Avare* of Moliere, which conforms more to the idea of *avarice*, than to that of the real *avaricious man*. But here again, the reader will not underſtand me, as ſaying this in the ſtrict ſenſe of the words. I even think Moliere faulty in the inſtance given; though, with ſome neceſſary explanation, it may well enough ſerve to expreſs my meaning.

The view of the comic ſcene being to delineate characters, this end, I ſuppoſe, will be attained moſt perfectly, by making thoſe characters as *univerſal* as poſſible. For thus the perſon ſhewn in the drama, being the repreſentative of all characters of the ſame kind, furniſhes in the higheſt degree the entertainment of *humour*. But then this univerſality muſt be ſuch as agrees not to our idea of the *poſſible* effects of the character as conceived in the abſtract, but to the *actual* exertion of its powers; which experience juſtifies, and common life allows. Moliere, and before him Plautus, had offended in this; that for a

picture of the *avaritious man*, they preſented us with a fantaſtic unpleaſing draught of the *paſſion of avarice*. I call this a *fantaſtic* draught, becauſe it hath no archetype in nature. And it is, farther, an *unpleaſing* one; for, being the delineation of a *ſimple paſſion unmixed*, it wanted all thoſe

—Lights and ſhades, whoſe well-accorded ſtrife
Gives all the ſtrength and colour of our life.

Theſe *lights and ſhades* (as the poet finely calls the intermixture of many paſſions, which, with the *leading* or principal one, form the human character) muſt be blended together in every picture of dramatic manners; becauſe the avowed buſineſs of the drama is to image real life. Yet the draught of the *leading* paſſion muſt be as general as this *ſtrife* in nature permits, in order to expreſs the intended character more perfectly.

All which again is eaſily illuſtrated in the inſtance of painting. In *portraits of character*, as we may call thoſe that give a picture of the *manners*, the artiſt, if he be of real ability, will not go to work on the poſſibility

poſſibility of an abſtract idea. All he intends is, to ſhew that ſome one quality *predominates:* and this he images ſtrongly, and by ſuch ſignatures as are moſt conſpicuous in the operation of the *leading paſſion.* And when he hath done this, we may, in common ſpeech or in compliment, if we pleaſe, to his art, ſay of ſuch a portrait that it images to us not the *man*, but the *paſſion*; juſt as the antients obſerved of the famous ſtatue of Apollodorus by Silarion, that it expreſſed not the angry *Apollodorous*, but his paſſion of *anger* [*f*]. But by this muſt be underſtood only that he has well expreſſed the leading parts of the deſigned character. For the reſt, he treats his *ſubject* as he would any other; that is, he repreſents the *concomitant affections*, or conſiders merely that general ſymmetry and proportion which are expected in a human figure. And this is to copy nature, which affords no ſpecimen of a man turned all into a ſingle paſſion. No metamorphoſis could be more ſtrange or incredible.

[*f*] *Non hominem ex ære fecit, ſed iracundiam.* Plin. xxxiv. 8.

Yet portraits of this vicious taſte are the admiration of common ſtarers, who, if they find a picture of a *miſer* for inſtance (as there is no commoner ſubject of moral portraits) in a collection, where every muſcle is ſtrained, and feature hardened into the expreſſion of this idea, never fail to profeſs their wonder and approbation of it.—On this idea of excellence, Le Brun's book of the PASSIONS muſt be ſaid to contain a ſet of the juſteſt *moral portraits:* And the CHARACTERS of Theophraſtus might be recommended, in a *dramatic* view, as preferable to thoſe of Terence.

The virtuoſi in the fine arts would certainly laugh at the former of theſe judgments. But the latter, I ſuſpect, will not be thought ſo extraordinary: at leaſt if one may gueſs from the practice of ſome of our beſt comic writers, and the ſucceſs which ſuch plays have commonly met with. It were eaſy to inſtance in almoſt all plays of character. But if the reader would ſee the extravagance of building dramatic manners on abſtract ideas, in its full light, he needs only turn to B. Jonſon's *Every man*

out

out of his humour; which, under the name of a *play of character*, is in fact an unnatural, and, as the painters call it, *hard* delineation of a group of *ſimply exiſting paſſions*, wholly chimerical, and unlike to any thing we obſerve in the commerce of real life. Yet this comedy has always had its admirers. And *Randolph*, in particular, was ſo taken with the deſign, that he ſeems to have formed his *muſe's looking-glaſs* in expreſs imitation of it.

Shakeſpeare, we may obſerve, is in this, as in all the other more eſſential beauties of the drama, a perfect model. If the diſcerning reader peruſe attentively his comedies with this view, he will find his *beſt-marked* characters diſcourſing, through a great deal of their *parts*, juſt like any other, and only expreſſing their eſſential and leading qualities occaſionally, and as circumſtances concur to give an eaſy expoſition to them. This ſingular excellence of his comedy, was the effect of his copying faithfully after nature, and of the force and vivacity of his genius, which made him attentive to what the progreſs of the ſcene ſucceſſively

ceſſively preſented to him: whilſt *imitation* and *inferior talents* occaſion little writers to wind themſelves up into the habit of attending perpetually to their main view, and a ſolicitude to keep their favourite characters in conſtant play and agitation. Though, in this illiberal exerciſe of their wit, they may be ſaid to uſe the *perſons of their drama* as a certain facetious ſort do their *acquaintance*, whom they urge and teize with their civilities, not to give them a reaſonable ſhare in the converſation, but to force them to play *tricks* for the diverſion of the company.

I have been the longer on this argument, to prevent the reader's carrying what I ſay of the ſuperiority of *plays of character* to *plays of intrigue* into an extreme; a miſtake, into which ſome good writers have been unſuſpectingly betrayed by the acknowledged truth of the general principle. It is ſo natural for men, on all occaſions, to fly out into extremes, that too much care cannot be had to retain them in a due medium. But to return from this digreſſion to

the

the conſideration of the difference of the two dramas.

3. A ſameneſs of *character is not uſually objected to in tragedy: in comedy, it would not be endured.* The paſſion of *avarice*, to reſume the inſtance given above, being the main object, we find nothing but a diſguſtful repetition in a ſecond attempt to delineate that *character*. *A particular cruel man* only engroſſing our regard in *Nero*, when the train of events evidencing ſuch cruelty is changed, we have all the novelty we look for, and can contemplate with pleaſure the very *ſame* character, ſet forth by a different courſe of action, or diſplayed in ſome other *perſon*.

4. Comedy ſucceeds beſt when the ſcene is laid *at home*, tragedy for the moſt part when *abroad*. "This appears at firſt "ſight whimſical and capricious, but has "its foundation in nature. What we chief-"ly ſeek in comedy is a true image of life "and *manners*; but we are not eaſily "brought to think we have it given us, "when dreſſed in foreign modes and faſh-"ions. And yet a good writer muſt fol-

"low

" low his ſcene, and obſerve decorum. On " the contrary, it is the action in tragedy " which moſt engages our attention. But " to fit a domeſtic occurrence for the ſtage, " we muſt take greater liberties with the " action than a well-known ſtory will al- " low." [*Pope's Works*, vol. iv. p. 185.]

Other *characters* of the two dramas, as well *peculiar*, as *common*, which might be accounted for from the juſt notion of them, delivered above, I leave to the obſervation of the reader. For my intention is not to write a complete treatiſe on the drama, but briefly to lay down ſuch principles, from whence its *laws* may be derived.

CHAP. II.

OF THE GENIUS OF COMEDY.

BUT it may not be amiſs to expreſs myſelf a little more fully as to the *genius* of comedy; which, for want of paſſing through the hands of ſuch a critic, as Ariſtotle has been leſs perfectly underſtood.

Its *end* is the production of *humour:* or, which comes to the ſame thing, " of that " *pleaſure*,

"*pleaſure*, which the *truth* of repreſenta-
"tion affords, in the *exhibition* of the *pri-*
"*vate characters* of life, more particularly
"their *ſpecific differences.*" I add this *latter* clauſe, becauſe the principal pleaſure we take in contemplating characters conſiſts in noting thoſe *differences.* The general attributes of humanity, if repreſented ever ſo truly, give us but a ſlender entertainment. They, of courſe, make a part of the drama; but we chiefly delight in a picture of thoſe peculiar *traits*, which diſtinguiſh the ſpecies. Now theſe diſcriminating marks in the characters of men are not *neceſſarily* the cauſes of ridicule, or pleaſantry of any kind; but *accidentally*, and according to the nature or quality of them. The vanity, and impertinent boaſting of *Thraſo* is the natural object of *contempt*, and, when truly and forcibly expreſſed in his own character, provokes *ridicule.* The eaſy humanity of *Mitio*, which is the leading part of his character, is the object of *approbation*; and, when ſhewn in his own conduct, excites a *pleaſure*, in common with all juſt *expreſſion of the manners*,

but of a *ſerious* nature, as being joined with the ſentiment of *eſteem*.

But now as moſt men find a greater pleaſure in gratifying the paſſion of *contempt*, than the calm inſtinct of *approbation*, and ſince perhaps the conſtitution of human life is ſuch, as affords more exerciſe for the one than the other, hence it hath come to paſs, that the comic poet, who paints for the generality, and follows nature, chuſes more commonly to ſelect and deſcribe thoſe *peculiarities* in the human character, which, by their nature, excite *pleaſantry*, than ſuch as create a ſerious regard and eſteem. Hence ſome perſons have appropriated the name of *comedies* to thoſe dramas, which chiefly aim at producing *humour*, in the more *proper* ſenſe of the word; under which view it means "ſuch an expreſſion or picture of what is "odd, or inordinate in each character, as "gives us the fulleſt and ſtrongeſt image "of the original, and by the truth of the "repreſentation expoſes the *ridicule* of it." And it is certain, that comedy receives great advantage from repreſentations of this

this kind. Nay, it cannot well ſubſiſt without them. Yet it doth not exclude the other and more *ſerious* entertainment, which, as it ſtands on the ſame foundation of *truth of repreſentation*, I venture to include under the *common term*.

Further, there are *two ways* of evidencing the characteriſtic and predominant qualities of men, or, of producing *humour*, which require to be obſerved. The *one* is, when they are ſhewn in the perpetual courſe and tenor of the repreſentation; that is, when the *humour* reſults from the *general* conduct of the perſon in the drama. and the diſcourſe, which he holds in it. The *other* is, when, by an happy and lively ſtroke, the characteriſtic quality is laid open and expoſed *at once*.

The *firſt* ſort of *humour* is that which we find in the antients, and eſpecially Terence. The *latter* is almoſt peculiar to the moderns; who, in uniting theſe two ſpecies of *humour*, have brought a vaſt improvement to the comic ſcene. The reaſon of this difference may perhaps have been the ſingular ſimplicity of the old writers, who

were contented to take up with ſuch ſentiments or circumſtances, as moſt naturally and readily occurred in the courſe of the drama: whereas the moderns have been ambitious to ſhew a more exquiſite and ſtudied inveſtigation into the workings of human nature, and have ſought out for thoſe peculiarly ſtriking lineaments, in which the eſſence of character conſiſts. On the ſame account, I ſuppoſe, it was that the antients had *fewer* characters in their plays, than the moderns, and thoſe more *general*; that is, their dramatic writers were well ſatisfied with picturing the moſt *uſual* perſonages, and in their moſt *obvious* lights. They did not, as the moderns (who, if they would aſpire to the praiſe of *novelty*, were obliged to this route), caſt about for leſs *familiar* characters; and the nicer and *leſs obſerved* peculiarities which diſtinguiſh *each*. Be it as it will, the obſervation is certain. Later dramatiſts have apparently ſhewn a more accurate knowledge of human life: and, by opening theſe new and untryed veins of *humour*, have exceedingly enriched the comedy of our times.

But,

But, though we are not to look for the *two ſpecies of humour*, before-mentioned, in the ſame perfection on the ſimpler ſtages of *Greece and Rome*, as in *our* improved Theatres, yet the *firſt* of them was clearly ſeen and ſucceſsfully practiſed by the antient comic maſters; and there are not wanting in them ſome few examples even of the *laſt*. "The old man in the *Mother-*
"*in-Law* ſays to his Son,

Tum tu igitur nihil adtuliſti hac plus quâ ſententiâ.

"This, as an excellent perſon obſerved to
"me, is true *humour*. For his character,
"which was that of a lover of money,
"drew the obſervation naturally and forci-
"bly from him. His diſappointment of a
"rich ſucceſſion made him ſpeak contempti-
"bly of a moral leſſon, which rich and
"covetous men, in their beſt humours, have
"no high reverence for. And this too
"without *deſign*; which is important, and
"ſhews the diſtinction of what, in the more
"reſtrained ſenſe of the word, we call *hu-*
"*mour*, from other modes of *pleaſantry*.
"For had a young friend of the ſon, an un-
"concerned ſpectator of the ſcene, made

" the obſervation, it had then, in another's
" mouth, been *wit*, or a deſigned *banter* on
" the father's diſappointment. As, on the
" other hand, when ſuch characteriſtic qua-
" lities are exaggerated, and the expreſſion
" of them ſtretched beyond *truth*, they be-
" come *buffoonry*, even in the perſon's *own*."

This is an inſtance of the *ſecond ſpecies* of humour, under its idea of exciting *ridicule*. But it may, alſo, be employed with the utmoſt *ſerioufneſs*; as being only a method of expreſſing the *truth* of character in the *moſt ſtriking* manner. This ſame *old man* in the Hecyra will furniſh an example. Though a lover of money, he appears, in the main, of an honeſt and worthy nature, and to have born the trueſt affection to an amiable and favourite ſon. In the perplexity of the ſcene, which had ariſen from the ſuppoſed miſunderſtanding between his *ſon's* wife and his *own*, he propoſes, as an expedient to end all differences, to retire with his wife into the country. And to enforce this propoſal to the young man, who had his reaſons for being againſt it, he adds,

odioſa

odioſa haec eſt aetas adoleſcentulis:
E medio aequum excedere eſt: poſtremò nos jam fabula
Sumus, Pamphile, ſenex atque anus.

There is nothing, I ſuppoſe, in theſe words, which provokes a ſmile. Yet the *humour* is ſtrong, as before. In his ſolicitude to promote his ſon's ſatisfaction, he lets fall a ſentiment truly characteriſtic, and which old men uſually take great pains to conceal; I mean, his acknowledgment of *that ſuſpicious fear of contempt, which is natural to old age.* So true a picture of life, in the repreſentation of this *weakneſs*, might, in other circumſtances, have created ſome *pleaſantry*; but the *occaſion*, which forced it from him, diſcovering, at the ſame time, the *amiable diſpoſition* of the ſpeaker, covers the ridicule of it, or more properly converts it into an object of our *eſteem.*

We have here, then, a kind of *intermediate* ſpecies of *humour* betwixt the *ridiculous* and the *grave*; and may perceive how inſenſibly the *one* becomes the *other*, by the accidental mixture of a virtuous *quality*, attracting *eſteem.* Which may ſerve to reconcile the reader to the appli-

cation of this *term* even to ſuch *expreſſion* of the manners, as is perfectly *ſerious*; that is, where the *quality repreſented* is entirely, and without the leaſt *touch* of attending ridicule, the object of *moral approbation* to the mind. As in that famous aſſeveration of Chremes in the *Self-tormentor*:

Homo ſum: humani nihil à me alienum puto.

This is a ſtrong expreſſion of character; and, coming unaffectedly from him in anſwer to the cutting reproof of his friend,

Chreme, tantumne ab re tuâ 'ſt oti tibi
Aliena ut cures; ea quae nihil ad te adtinent?

hath the eſſence of true *humour*, that is, is a *lively picture of the manners without deſign*.

Yet in this inſtance, which hath not been obſerved, the *humour*, though of a ſerious caſt, is heightened by a mixture of *ſatire*. For we are not to take this, as hath conſtantly been done, for a ſentiment of pure humanity and the natural ebullition of benevolence. We may obſerve in it a deſigned ſtroke of ſatirical reſentment.

The Self-tormentor, as we ſaw, had ridiculed Chremes' *curioſity* by a ſevere reproof. Chremes, to be even with him, reflects upon the *inhumanity* of his temper. "You," ſays he, "ſeem ſuch a foe to humanity, "that you ſpare it not *in yourſelf*; I, on the "other hand, am affected, when I ſee it "ſuffer in *another*."

Whence we learn, that, though all which is requiſite to conſtitute comic humour, be *a juſt expreſſion of character without deſign*, yet ſuch *expreſſion* is felt more *ſenſibly*, when it is further enlivened by *ridicule*, or quickened by the poignancy of *ſatire*.

From the account of comedy, here given, it may appear, that the idea of this drama is much enlarged beyond what it was in Ariſtotle's time; who defines it to be, *an imitation of light and trivial actions, provoking ridicule*. His notion was taken from the ſtate and practice of the Athenian ſtage; that is, from the *old* or *middle* comedy, which anſwers to this deſcription. The great revolution, which the introduction of the *new comedy* made in the drama, did not happen till afterwards. This

propoſed

propoſed for its *object*, in general, *the actions and characters of ordinary life*; which are not, of neceſſity, ridiculous, but, as appears to every obſerver, of a mixt kind, *ſerious*, as well as *ludicrous*, and, within their proper ſphere of influence, not unfrequently, even *important*. This kind of *imitation*, therefore, now admits the *ſerious*; and its ſcenes, even without the leaſt mixture of *pleaſantry*, are entirely *comic*. Though the common run of *laughers* in our theatre are ſo little aware of the extenſion of this *province*, that I ſhould ſcarcely have hazarded the obſervation, but for the authority of *Terence*; who hath confeſſedly very little of the *pleaſant* in his drama. Nay, one of the moſt admired of his comedies hath the gravity, and, in ſome places, almoſt the ſolemnity of *tragedy itſelf*. But this *idea* of comedy is not peculiar to the more polite and liberal *antients*. Some of the beſt *modern* comedies are faſhioned in agreement to it. And an inſtance or two, which I am going to produce from the ſtage of ſimple nature, may ſeem to ſhew it the plain ſuggeſtion of common ſenſe.

" The

"The Amautas (ſays the author of the "*Royal Commentaries of* PERU), who were "men of the beſt ingenuity amongſt them, "invented COMEDIES and TRAGEDIES; "which, on their ſolemn feſtivals, they re- "preſented before the King and the Lords "of his court. The plot or argument of "their *tragedies* was, to repreſent *their* "*military exploits, and the triumphs, victo-* "*ries, and heroic actions, of their renowned* "*men.* And the ſubject or deſign of their "*comedies* was, to demonſtrate *the man-* "*ner of good huſbandry in cultivating and* "*manuring their fields, and to ſhew the* "*management of domeſtic affairs, with other* "*familiar matters.* Theſe plays, continues "he, were not made up of obſcene and "diſhoneſt farces, but ſuch as were of "*ſerious entertainment, compoſed of grave* "*and acute ſentences,* &c."

Two things are obſervable in this brief account of the Peruvian drama. *Firſt*, that its *ſpecies* had reſpect to the very different *objects* of the *higher* or *lower* ſtations. For the *great and powerful* were occupied

in

in *war:* and *agriculture* was the chief employment of *private and ordinary life.* And, in this diſtinction, theſe *Indian* perfectly agreed with the old Roman poets; whoſe PRAETEXTATA and TOGATA ſhew, that they had preciſely the ſame ideas of the drama. *Secondly*, we do not learn only, what difference there *was* betwixt their tragedy and comedy, but we are alſo told, what difference there was *not.* It was not, that one was *ſerious*, and the other *pleaſant.* For we find it expreſsly aſſerted of *both*, that they *were of grave and ſerious entertainment.*

And this laſt will explain a ſimilar obſervation on the Chineſe, *who*, as P. DE PREMERE acquaints us, *make no diſtinction betwixt tragedies and comedies.* That is, *no diſtinction*, but what the different *ſubjects* of each make neceſſary. They do not, as our European dramas, differ in this, that the *one* is intended to make us *weep*, and the other to make us *laugh.*

Theſe are full and preciſe teſtimonies. For I lay no ſtreſs on what the Hiſtorian of *Peru* tells us, *that there were no obſceni-*

ties

ties in their comedy, nor on what an encomiaſt of *China* pretends, *that there is not ſo much as an obſcene word in all their language* [g]: as being ſenſible, that though indeed theſe muſt needs be conſiderable abatements to the *humour* of their comic ſcenes, yet, their ingenuity might poſſibly find means to remedy theſe defects by the invention and dextrous application of the *double entendre*, which, on our ſtage, is found to ſupply the place of rank *obſcenity*, and, indeed, to do its office of exciting *laughter* almoſt as well.

But, as I ſaid, there is no occaſion for this *argument*. We may venture, without the help of it, to join theſe authorities to *that* of Terence; which, together, enable us to conclude very fully, in oppoſition to

[g] P. Alvarez Semedo, ſpeaking of their poetry, ſays, "Le plus grand advantage et la plus "grande utilité qu'en ont tiré les Chinois, eſt cette "grande modeſtie et retenuë incomparable, qui ſe "voit en leurs ecrits, *n'ayant pas même une lettre en "tous leurs livres, ni en toutes leurs ecritures, pour ex-"primer les parties honteuſes de la nature.*" [Hist. Univ. de la Chine, p. 82. à Lyon 1667. 4to.]

the

the general ſentiment, that *ridicule* is not of the *eſſence of comedy* [*b*].

But, becauſe the general practice of the *Greek and Roman theatres*, which ſtrongly countenance the other opinion, may ſtill be thought to outweigh this ſingle *Latin poet*, together with all the *eaſtern and weſtern barbarians*, that can be thrown into the balance, let me go one ſtep further, and, by explaining the riſe and occaſion of this *practice*, demonſtrate, that, in the preſent caſe, their authority is, in fact, of no moment.

The form of the Greek, from whence the Roman and our drama is taken, though generally *improved* by reflexion and juſt criticiſm, yet, like ſo many other great inventions, was, in its original, the *product* of pure chance. Each of its ſpecies had ſprung out of a *chorus-ſong*, which was afterwards incorporated into the legitimate drama, and found eſſential to its true form. But *reaſon*, which ſaw to eſtabliſh what was

[*b*] LE RIDICULE EST CE QU'IL Y A DE PLUS ESSENTIEL A LA COMEDIE. [P. RAPIN, REFLEX. SUR LA POET. p. 154. PARIS 1684.]

right

right in this fortuitous conformation of the drama, did not equally ſucceed in detecting and ſeparating what was *wrong*. For the *occaſion* of this chorus-ſong, in their religious feſtivities, was widely different: the buſineſs, *at one time*, being to expreſs their gratitude, in celebrating the praiſes of their gods and heroes; at *another*, to indulge their mirth, in jeſting and ſporting among themſelves. The character of their drama, which had its riſe from hence [*i*], conformed exactly to the difference of theſe *occaſions*. *Tragedy*, through all its

[*i*] Οἱ μὲν σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις, καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων τύχας· οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι, τὰς τῶν φαύλων, ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΨΟΓΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΟΥΝΤΕΣ, ΩΣΠΕΡ ΕΤΕΡΟΙ ΥΜΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΚΩΜΙΑ. [ΠΕΡ. ΠΟΙΗΤ. κδ.] This is Ariſtotle's account of the origin of the different *ſpecies of* POETRY. They were occaſioned, he ſays, by the different and even oppoſite *tempers and diſpoſitions of men: thoſe of a loftier ſpirit delighting in the encomiaſtic poetry, while the humbler ſort betook themſelves to ſatire.* But this, alſo, is the juſt account of the riſe and character of the different *ſpecies of the* DRAMA. For they grew up, he tells us in this very chapter, from the DITHYRAMBIC, and PHALLIC ſongs. And who were the *men*, who chaunted *theſe* but the ΣΕΜΝΟΤΕΡΟΙ, and ΕΥΤΕΛΕΣΤΕΡΟΙ, beforementioned? And how were they *employed* in them,

ſeveral

ſeveral ſucceſſive ſtages of improvement, was ſerious and even ſolemn. And a gay or rather buffoon ſpirit was the characteriſtic of *comedy*.

We ſee, then, the *genius* of theſe two poems was accidentally fixed in agreement to their reſpective *originals*; conſequent writers contenting themſelves to embelliſh and perfect, not *change*, the primary form. The practice of the antient ſtage is then of no further authority, than as it accords to juſt criticiſm. The ſolemn caſt of their *tragedy*, indeed, bears the teſt, and is found to be ſuitable to its real nature. The ſame does not appear of the burleſque form of *comedy*; no reaſon having been given, why *it* muſt, of neceſſity, have the *ridiculous* for its object. Nay the effects of

but the *former*, *in hymning the praiſes of Bacchus*; *the latter*, *in dealing about obſcene jokes and taunting invectives on each other?* So that the *characters* of the men, and their *ſubjects*, being exactly the ſame in *both*, what is ſaid of the *one* is equally applicable to the *other*. It was proper to obſerve this; or the reader might, perhaps, object to the uſe made of this paſſage, *here*, as well as *above*, where it is brought to illuſtrate Ariſtotle's notion of the *natures* of the tragic and comic poetry.

improved

improved criticiſm on the later Greek comedy give a preſumption of the direct contrary. For, in proportion to the gradual refinement of this *ſpecies* in the hands of its greateſt maſters, the buffoon caſt of the comic drama was inſenſibly dropt, and even grew into a ſeverity, which departed at length very widely from the original idea. The admirable ſcholar of THEOPHRASTUS, who had been tutored in the exact ſtudy of human life, ſaw ſo much of the genuine character of true comedy, that he cleanſed it, at once, from the greater part of thoſe buffoonries, which had, till his time, defiled its nature. His great imitator, Terence, went ſtill further; and, whether impelled by his native humour, or determined by his truer taſte, mixed ſo little of the *ridiculous* in his comedy, as plainly ſhews, it might, in his opinion, ſubſiſt entirely without it. His *practice* indeed, and the theory, here delivered, nearly meet. And the concluſion is, that *comedy*, which is the image of private life, may take either character of *pleaſant* or *ſerious*, as it chances, or even *unite* them into one piece;

but that the *former* is by no means more eſſential to its conſtitution, than the *latter*.

I foreſee but one objection, that can be made to this theory; which has, in effect, been obviated already. "It may be ſaid, "that, if this account of *comedy* be juſt, it "would follow, that it might, with equal "propriety, admit the graveſt and moſt "affecting events, which inferior life fur-"niſhes, as the lighteſt. Whereas it is "notorious, that diſtreſſes of a deep and "ſolemn nature, though faithfully copied "from the fortunes of private men, would "never be endured, under the name of "*comedy*, on the ſtage. Nay, ſuch repre-"ſentations would rather paſs, in the pub-"lic judgment, for legitimate *tragedies*; of "which kind, we have, indeed, ſome exam-"ples in our language."

Two things are miſtaken in this objection. *Firſt*, it ſuppoſes, that deep diſtreſſes of every kind are inconſiſtent with comedy; the contrary of which may be learnt from the SELF-TORMENTOR of Terence. *Next*, it inſinuates, that, if deep diſtreſſes of any kind may be admitted into

into comedy, the *deepeſt* may. Which is equally erroneous. For, the *manners* being the proper object of comedy, the *diſtreſs* muſt not exceed a certain degree of *ſeverity*, leſt it draw off the mind from them, and confine it to the *action* only: as would be the caſe of *murder*, *adultery*, and other atrocious crimes, infeſting *private*, as well as *public*, life, were they to be repreſented, in all their horrors, on the ſtage. And though ſome of theſe, as *adultery*, have been brought, of late, into the comic ſcene; yet it was not till it had loſt the atrocity of its nature, and was made the ſubject of mirth and pleaſantry to the faſhionable world. But for this happy diſpoſition of the times, comedy, as managed by ſome of our writers, had loſt its nature, and become *tragic*. And, yet, conſidered as *tragic*, ſuch repreſentations of low life had been improper. Becauſe, where the intent is to *affect*, the ſubject is with more advantage taken from *high life*, all the circumſtances being, there, more peculiarly adapted to anſwer that end.

The ſolution then of the difficulty is, in one word, this. All *diſtreſſes* are not *improper* in comedy; but ſuch only as attach the mind to the *fable*, in neglect of the *manners*, which are its chief object. On the other hand, all *diſtreſſes* are not *proper* in tragedy; but ſuch only as are of force to intereſt the mind in the *action*, preferably to the obſervation of the *manners*; which can only be done, or is done moſt effectually, when the *diſtreſsful event*, repreſented, is taken from *public life*. So that the *diſtreſſes*, ſpoken of, are equally unſuited to what the natures *both* of *comedy and tragedy*, reſpectively, demand.

CHAP. III.

OF M. DE FONTENELLE'S NOTION OF COMEDY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the pains I have taken, in the preceding chapters, to eſtabliſh my theory of the comic drama, I find myſelf obliged to ſupport it ſtill further againſt the authority of a very eminent modern critic. M. de Fontenelle hath juſt now publiſhed two volumes of plays, among

among which are ſome comedies of a very ſingular character. They are not only in a high degree *pathetic*; but the ſcene of them is laid in *antiquity*; and great perſonages, ſuch as *Kings*, *Princeſſes*, &c. are of the drama. He hath beſides endeavoured to juſtify this extraordinary ſpecies of comedy by a very ingenious preface. It will therefore be neceſſary for me to examine this new ſyſtem, and to obviate, as far as I can, the prejudices which the name of the author, and the intrinſic merit of the plays themſelves, will occaſion in favour of it.

His ſyſtem, as explained in the preface to theſe comedies, is, briefly, this.

"The *ſubject* of dramatic repreſenta-
"tion, he obſerves, is ſome event or action
"of *human life*, which can be conſidered
"only in two views, as being either that
"of *public*, or of *private*, perſons. The
"*end* of ſuch repreſentation, continues he,
"is to *pleaſe*, which it doth, either by
"engaging the attention, or by moving
"the paſſions. The *former* is done by
"repreſenting to us ſuch events as are

" *great, noble, or unexpected:* The *latter* by " ſuch as are *dreadful, pitiable, tender, or* " *pleaſant.* Of theſe ſeveral ſources of " *pleaſure,* he forms what he calls a *dramatic* " *ſcale,* the extremes of which he admits to " be altogether inconſiſtent; no art being " ſufficient to bring together the *grand,* the " *noble,* or the *terrible,* into the ſame piece " with the *pleaſant or ridiculous.* The im- " preſſions of theſe objects, he allows, are " perfectly oppoſed to each other. So " that a tragedy, which takes for its ſubject " a *noble,* or *terrible* event, can by no " means admit the *pleaſant.* And a co- " medy, which repreſents a *pleaſant* action, " can never admit the *terrible* or *noble.* " But it is otherwiſe, he conceives, with the " intermediate ſpecies of this ſcale. The " *ſingular,* the *pitiable,* the *tender,* which " fill up the interval betwixt the *noble* and " *ridiculous,* are equally conſiſtent with " tragedy and comedy. An uncommon " ſtroke of Fortune may as well befall a " peaſant as a prince. And two lovers of " an inferior condition may have as lively " a paſſion for each other, and, when ſome

" unlucky

" unlucky event ſeparates them, may de-
" ſerve our pity as much, as thoſe of the
" higheſt fortune. Theſe ſituations then
" are equally ſuited to both dramas. They
" will only be modified in each a little differ-
" ently. From hence he concludes, that
" there may be *dramatic repreſentations*,
" which are neither perfectly tragedies nor
" perfectly comedies, but yet partake of the
" nature of each, and that in different pro-
" portions. There might be a ſpecies of
" *tragedy*, for inſtance, which ſhould unite
" the *tender* with the *noble* in any degree,
" or even ſubſiſt entirely by means of the
" *tender*: And of *comedy*, which ſhould
" aſſociate the *tender* with the *pleaſant*, or
" even retain the *tender* throughout to a
" certain degree to the entire excluſion of
" the *pleaſant*.

" As to his laying the *ſcene* of his co-
" medy in Greece, he thinks this practice
" ſufficiently juſtified by the practice of the
" French writers, who make no ſcruple to
" lay their ſcene abroad, as in *Spain* or
" *England*.

"Laſtly, for what concerns the intro-
"duction of great perſonages into the co-
"mic drama, he obſerves, that by *ordinary*
"*life*, which he ſuppoſes the proper ſub-
"ject of comedy, he underſtands as well
"that of Emperors and Princes, at times
"when they are only men, as of inferior
"perſons. And he thinks it very evident
"that what paſſes in the ordinary *life*, ſo
"underſtood, of the greateſt men, is truly
"comick [*k*]."

This is a ſimple expoſition of M. de Fontenelle's idea of comedy, which, however, he hath ſet off with great elegance and a plauſibility of illuſtration, ſuch as writers of his claſs are never at a loſs to give to any ſubject they would recommend.

Now though the principal aim of what I have to offer in confutation of this ſyſtem be to combat the ingenious writer's notion of comedy; yet as the tenor of his *preface* leads him to deliver his ſentiments alſo of tragedy, I ſhall not ſcruple intermixing, after his example, ſome reflexions on this latter drama.

[*k*] *Prof. generale*, tom. vii. Par. 1751.

M. de

M. de Fontenelle ſets out with obſerving, that the end of dramatic repreſentation is to *pleaſe*. This end is very general. But he explains himſelf more preciſely, by ſaying, "*this pleaſure is of two kinds, and conſiſts either in attaching the mind, or affecting it.*" And this is not much amiſs. But his further explanation of theſe terms is ſuſpicious. "The mind, ſays he, is ATTACHED by the repreſentation of what "is *great*, *noble*, *ſingular*, or *unexpected*: It "is AFFECTED by what is *terrible*, *pitiable*, "*tender*, or *pleaſant* [*l*]." In this enumeration, he forgets the merely *natural* draught of the manners. Yet this is ſurely one of the means by which the drama is enabled to *attach* the ſpectator. With me, I confeſs, this is the firſt excellence of comedy. Nor could he mean to include this ſource of pleaſure under his *ſecond* diviſion. For though a lively picture of the manners may in ſome ſort be ſaid to *affect* us, yet

[*l*] "On attache par le grand, par le noble, par "le rare, par l'imprévû. On émeut par le terrible "ou affreux, par le pitoyable, par le tendre, par le "plaiſant ou ridicule." p. xiv.

certainly

certainly not as coming under the conſideration of what is *terrible*, *pitiable*, *tender*, or *ridiculous*, but ſimply of what is *natural*. The picture is *pleaſant* or otherwiſe, as it chances; but is always the ſource of entertainment to the obſerver. When the pleaſantry is high, it takes indeed the paſſion of *ridicule*. In other inſtances, it can ſcarcely be ſaid to *move*, "emouvoir." Now this I take to be a very conſiderable omiſſion. For if the obſervation of character be a *pleaſure*, which comedy is more particularly qualified to give, and which is not in any degree ſo compatible with tragedy, does not this bid fair for being the *proper* end of comedy? Human life, he ſays, which is the ſubject of the drama, can only be regarded in two views, as either that *of the great, and principally of kings*, and that of *private men*. Now the *attachments* and *emotions*, he ſpeaks of, are excited more powerfully and to more advantage in a repreſentation of the *former*. That which is *peculiar* to a draught of *ordinary life*, or which is attained *moſt perfectly* by it, is the delight ariſing from a juſt exhibition of the manners. No,

he

he will ſay. The *pleaſant* belongs as peculiarly to a picture of common life, as the *natural*. Surely not. Common life *diſtorted*, or what we call *farce*, gives the entertainment of *ridicule* more perfectly than comedy. The only pleaſure, which an expoſition of *ordinary life* affords, diſtinct from that we receive from a view of *high life* on the one hand, and ordinary life *diſfigured* on the other, is the ſatisfaction of contemplating the *truth of character*. However then this ſpecies of repreſentation may be improved by incorporating other kinds of excellence with it, is not *this*, *of pleaſing* by the *truth* of character, to be conſidered as the *appropriate* end of comedy?

I do not diſpute the propriety of ſerious or even affecting comedies. I have already explained myſelf as to this point, and have ſhewn under what reſtrictions *the weeping comedy*, *la larmoyante comedie*, as the French call it, may be admitted on my plan. The main queſtion is, whether there be any foundation in nature for two diſtinct and ſeparate ſpecies *only* of the drama; or whether,

whether, as he pretends, a certain *ſcale*, which connects by an inſenſible communication the ſeveral modifications of dramatic repreſentation, unites and incorporates the two ſpecies into one.

It is true the laws of the drama, as formed by Ariſtotle out of the Greek poets, can of themſelves be no rule to us in this matter; becauſe theſe poets had given no example of ſuch intermediate ſpecies. This, for aught appears to the contrary, may be an extenſion of the province of the drama. The queſtion then muſt be tried by the ſucceſs of this new practice, compared with the general dictates of common ſenſe.

For I perfectly agree with this judicious critic, that we have a right to inquire if, in what concerns the ſtage, we are not ſometimes governed by *eſtabliſhed cuſtoms* inſtead of rules; for *rules* they will not deſerve to be eſteemed, till they have undergone the rigid ſcrutiny of reaſon [*m*].

[*m*] "Que nous ſommes en droit d'examiner ſi, "en fait de Theatre, nous n'aurions pas quelquefois "des *habitudes* au lieu de *regles*, car les regles ne

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In reſpect of the *Practice*, then, it muſt be owned, there are many ſtories in private life capable of being worked up in ſuch a manner as to move the paſſions ſtrongly; and, on the contrary, many ſubjects taken from the great world capable of diverting the ſpectator by a pleaſant picture of the manners. And laſtly, it is alſo true, that both theſe ends may be affected together, in ſome degree, in either piece. But here is the point of enquiry. Whether, if the end in view be to *affect*, this will not be accompliſhed BETTER by taking a ſubject from the public than private fortunes of men: Or, if the end be to *pleaſe by the truth of character*, whether we are not likely to perceive this pleaſure more FULLY when the ſtory is of private, rather than of public life? For, as Ariſtotle ſaid finely on a like occaſion, *we are not to look for every ſort of pleaſure from tragedy* [or comedy], *but that which is peculiarly proper to each* [*n*].

" peuvent l'être qu'après avoir ſubi les rigueurs du " tribunal de la raiſon." p. 37.

[*n*] Οὐ πᾶσαν δὲ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν. Poet. c. 14.

" Human

"Human life, this writer ſays, can be con-
"ſidered but as *high* or *low*;" and "a re-
"preſentation of it can pleaſe only as it
"*attaches*, or *affects*." I aſk then, to which ſort of life ſhall the dramatic poet confine himſelf, when he would endeavour to raiſe theſe *affections* or theſe *attachments* to the higheſt pitch. The anſwer is plain. For if the poet would excite the tender paſſions, they will riſe higher of neceſſity, when awakened by noble ſubjects, than if called forth by ſuch as are of ordinary and familiar notice. This is occaſioned by what one may call a TRANSITION OF THE PASSIONS: that affection of the mind which is produced by the impreſſion of great objects, being more eaſily convertible into the ſtronger degrees of pity and commiſeration, than ſuch as ariſes from a view of the concerns of common life. The more *important* the intereſt, the greater part our minds take in it, and the more ſuſceptible are we of *paſſion*.

On the other hand, when the intended pleaſure is to reſult from ſtrong pictures of human nature, this will be felt more entirely,

entirely, and with more ſincerity, when we are at leiſure to attend to them in the repreſentation of inferior perſons, than when the rank of the ſpeaker, or dignity of the ſubject, is conſtantly drawing ſome part of our obſervation to itſelf. In a word, though *mixed dramas* may give us pleaſure, yet the pleaſure, in either kind, will be LESS in proportion to the mixture. And the *end* of each will be then attained MOST PERFECTLY when its character, according to the antient practice, is obſerved.

To conſider then the writer's favourite poſition, that *le pitoyable* and *le tendre* are "common both to tragedy and comedy." The poſition, in general, is true. The difficulty is in fixing the degree, with which it ought to prevail in each. If *paſſion* predominates in a picture of private life, I call it a *tragedy* of private ſtory, becauſe it produces the *end* which tragedy deſigns. If *humour* predominates in a draught of public life, I call it a *comedy* of public ſtory, becauſe it gives the *pleaſure* of pure comedy. Let theſe then be two new ſpecies of the drama, if you pleaſe, and let new

names

names be invented for them. Yet, were I a poet, I ſhould certainly adhere to the old practice. That is, if I wanted to produce *paſſion*, I ſhould think myſelf able to raiſe it higheſt on a great ſubject. And if I aimed to *attach* by *humour*, I ſhould depend on catching the whole attention of the ſpectator more ſucceſsfully on a familiar ſubject.

But by a *familiar ſubject*, this critic will ſay, he means, as I do, a ſubject taken from *ordinary life*; and that the affairs of kings and princes may very properly come into comedy under this view. Beſides the reaſon already produced againſt this innovation, I have this further exception to it. The buſineſs of comedy, he will allow, is in part at leaſt to exhibit the *manners*. Now the princely or heroic comedy is ſingularly improper for this end. If perſons of ſo diſtinguiſhed a rank be the actors in comedy, propriety demands that they be ſhewn in conformity to their characters in real life. But now that very politeneſs, which reigns in the courts of princes and the houſes of the great, prevents the *manners* from ſhew-

ing

ing themſelves, at leaſt with that diſtinctneſs and *relief* which we look for in dramatic characters. Inferior perſonages, acting with leſs reſerve and caution, afford the fitteſt occaſion to the poet of expreſſing their genuine tempers and diſpoſitions. Or, if a picture of the manners be expected from the introduction of great perſons, it can be only in tragedy, where the importance of the intereſts, and the ſtrong play of the paſſions, ſtrip them of their borrowed diſguiſes, and lay open their true characters. So that the princely, or *heroic*, comedy, is the leaſt fitted, of any kind of drama, to furniſh this pleaſure.

The antients appear to have had no doubt at all on the matter. The tragedy on low life, and comedy on high life, were refinements altogether unknown to them. What then hath occaſioned this revolution of taſte amongſt us? Principally, I conceive, theſe three things.

1. The comedy on high life hath ariſen from a *different ſtate of government*. In the free towns of Greece there was no room for that diſtinction of high and low comedy,

which the moderns have introduced. And the reaſon was, the members of thoſe communities were ſo nearly on a level, that any one was a repreſentative of the reſt. There was no ſtanding ſubordination of royalty, nobility, and commonalty, as with us. Their way of ennobling their characters was by making them Generals, Ambaſſadors, Magiſtrates, &c. and then, in that public view, they were fit perſonages for tragedy. When ſtripped of theſe enſigns of authority, they became ſimple citizens.

Amongſt us, perſons of elevated rank make a ſeparate order in the community, whoſe private lives however might, no doubt, be the ſubject of comic repreſentation. Why then are not theſe fit perſonages for comedy? The reaſon has been given. They want *dramatic manners*. Or if they did not, their elevated and ſeparate eſtate makes the generality conceive with ſuch reverence of them, that it would ſhock their notions of high life to ſee them employed in a courſe of comic adventures. And of this M. de Fontenelle himſelf was ſufficiently ſenſible. For ſpeaking in another

other place of the importance which the tragic action receives from the dignity of its perſons, he ſays, "When the actions are "of ſuch a kind as that, without loſing any "thing of their beauty, they might paſs be-"tween inferior perſons, the names of kings "and princes are nothing but a foreign "ornament which the poet gives to his "ſubject. Yet *this ornament, foreign as it "may be, is neceſſary: ſo fated are we to be "always dazzled by titles* [o]." Should he not have ſeen then, that this pageantry of titles, which is ſo requiſite to raiſe the dignity of the tragic drama, muſt for the ſame reaſon prevent the familiarity of the comic? The great themſelves are, no doubt, in this, as other inſtances, above *vulgar* prejudices. But the dramatic poet writes for the people.

2. The tragedy on low life, I ſuſpect, has been chiefly owing to our *modern romances*: which have brought the tender paſſion into great repute. It is the conſtant and almoſt ſole object of *le pitoyable* and *le tendre* in our drama. Now the prevalency

[o] *Reflex. ſur la poeſ.* p. 132.

of this paſſion, in all degrees, hath made it thought an indifferent matter, whether the ſtory, that exemplifies it, be taken from low or high life. As it rages equally in both, the pathos, it was believed, would be juſt the ſame. And it is true, if tragedy confine itſelf to the diſplay of this paſſion, the difference will be leſs ſenſible than in other inſtances. Becauſe the concern terminates more directly in the *tender pair* themſelves, and does not ſo neceſſarily extend itſelf to others. Yet to heighten this ſame pathos by the *grand* and *important*, would methinks be the means of affording a ſtill higher pleaſure.

3. After all, that effuſion of *ſoftneſs* which prevails to ſuch a degree in all our dramas, comic as well as tragic, to the excluſion of every other intereſt, is, perhaps, beſt accounted for by this writer. As the matter is delicate, I chuſe to give it in his own words: "On s'imagine naturellement, "que les piéces Grecques & les nôtres ont "été jugées au même tribunal, à celui d'un "public aſſés egal dans les deux nations; "mais cela n'eſt pas tout-a-fait vrai. Dans

"le

" le tribunal d'Athenes, *les femmes* n'avoient " pas de voix, ou n'en avoient que trés " peu. Dans le tribunal de Paris, c'eſt " préciſément le contraire; ici il eſt donc " queſtion de plaire aux femmes, qui aſſuré- " ment aimeront mieux le pitoyable & le " tendre, que terrible et même le grand." He adds, " *Et je ne crois pas au fond qu'elles* " *ayent grand tort.*" And what gallant man but would ſubſcribe to this opinion?

On the whole, this attempt of M. de Fontenelle, to innovate in the province of comedy, puts one in mind of that he made, many years ago, in paſtoral poetry. It is exactly the ſame ſpirit which has governed this polite writer in both adventures. He was once for bringing courtiers in maſquerade into *Arcadia*. And now he would ſet them unmaſked on the comic ſtage. Here, at leaſt, he thought they would be in place. But the ſimplicity of paſtoral dialogue would not ſuffer the one; and the familiarity of comic action forbids the other. It muſt be confeſſed, however, he hath ſucceeded better in the example of his comedies, than his paſtorals. And no wonder.

For what we call the *faſhions* and *manners* are confined to certain conditions of life, ſo that *paſtoral courtiers* are an evident contradiction and abſurdity. But the *appetites* and *paſſions* extending through all ranks, hence low tricks and low amours are thought to ſuit the miniſter and ſharper alike. However it be, the fact is, that M. de Fontenelle hath ſucceeded beſt in his *comedies*. And as his theory is likely to gain more credit from the ſucceſs of his practice than the force of his reaſoning, I think it proper to cloſe theſe remarks with an obſervation or two upon it.

There are, I obſerved, three things to be conſidered in his comedies, *his introduction of great perſonages, his practice of laying the ſcene in antiquity, and his pathos.*

Now to ſee the impropriety of the *firſt* of theſe innovations, we need only obſerve with what art he endeavours to conceal it. His very dexterity in managing his comic heroes clearly ſhews the natural repugnance he felt in his own mind betwixt the repreſentation of ſuch characters, and even his own idea of the comic drama.

The

The TYRANT is a ſtrange title of a comedy. It required ſingular addreſs to familiarize this frightful perſonage to our conceptions. Which yet he hath tolerably well done, but by ſuch expedients as confute his general theory. For to bring him down to the level of a comic character, he gives us to underſtand, that the *Tyrant* was an uſurper, who from a very mean birth had forced his way into the tyranny. And to lower him ſtill more, we find him repreſented, not only as odious to his people, but of a very contemptible character. He further makes him the tyrant only of a ſmall Greek town; ſo that he paſſes, with the modern reader, for little more than the Mayor of a corporation. There is alſo a plain illuſion in making a *ſimple citizen* demand his daughter in marriage. For under the cover of this word, which conveys the idea of a perſon in lower life, we think very little of the dignity of a free citizen of Corinth. Whence it appears that the poet felt the neceſſity of unkinging this tyrant as far as poſſible, before he could make a comic character of him.

The caſe of his ABDOLONIME is ſtill eaſier. It is true, the ſtructure of the fable requires us to have an eye to royalty; but all the pride and pomp of the regal character is ſtudiouſly kept out of ſight. Beſides, the affair of royalty does not commence till the action draws to a concluſion, the perſons of the drama being all ſimple particulars, and even of the loweſt figure, through the entire courſe of it.

The King of Sidon is, further, a paltry ſovereign, and a creature of Alexander. And the characters of the perſons, which are indeed admirably touched, are purpoſely contrived to leſſen our ideas of ſovereignty.

The LYSIANASSE is a tragedy in form, of that kind which hath a happy cataſtrophe. The *perſons*, *ſubject*, every thing ſo important, and attaches the mind ſo intirely to the event, that nothing intereſts more.

As to his *laying the ſcene in antiquity, and eſpecially in the free towns of Greece*, I would recommend it as an admirable expedient to all thoſe who are diſpoſed to follow

follow him in this new province of heroic comedy. For amongſt other advantages, it gives the writer an occaſion to fill the courts of his princes with *ſimple citizens*, which, as was obſerved, by no means anſwer to our ideas of nobility. But in any other view I cannot ſay much for the practice. It is for obvious reaſons highly inconvenient. Even this writer found it ſo, when in one of his plays, the MACATE, he was obliged to break through the propriety of antient manners in order to adapt himſelf to the modern taſte. His duel, as he himſelf ſays, "*a l'air bien François et bien peu Grec.*" The reader, if he pleaſes, may ſee his apology for this tranſgreſſion of decorum. Or, if there were no inconvenience of this ſort, the repreſentation of characters after the *antique* muſt, on many occaſions, be cold and diſguſting. At leaſt none but profeſſed ſcholars can be taken with it.

Nor is the uſage of the Latin writers any precedent. For, beſides that Horace, we know, condemned it as ſuitable only to the infancy of their comic poetry, the manners,

ners, laws, reilgion of the Greeks were in the main ſo ſimilar to their own, that the difference was hardly diſcernible. Or if it were otherwiſe in ſome points, the neighbourhood of this famous people and the intercourſe the Romans had with them, would bring them perfectly acquainted with ſuch difference. And this laſt reflexion ſhews how inſufficient it was for the author to excuſe his own practice from the authority of his countrymen; who, ſays he, "never ſcruple laying their ſcene in "Spain or England." Are the manners of antient Greece as familiar to a French pit, as thoſe of theſe two countries?

Laſtly, I have very little to object to the *pathos* of his comedy. When it is ſubſervient to the *manners*, as in the TESTAMENT and ABDOLONIME, I think it admirable. When it exceeds this degree, and takes the attention intirely, as in the LYSIANASSE, it gives a pleaſure indeed, but not the pleaſure appropriate to comedy. I regard it as a faint imperfect ſpecies of tragedy. After all, I fear, the *tender and pitiable* in comedy, though it muſt

muſt afford the higheſt pleaſure to ſenſible and elegant minds, is not perfectly ſuited to the apprehenſions of the generality. Are they ſuſceptible of the ſoft and delicate emotions which the fine diſtreſs in the *Teſtament* is intended to raiſe? Every one indeed is capable of being delighted through the *paſſions*; but they muſt be worked up, as in tragedy, to a greater height, before the generality can receive that delight from them. The ſame objection, it will be ſaid, holds againſt the finer ſtrokes of character. Not, I think, with the ſame force. I doubt our ſenſe of imitation, eſpecially of the *ridiculous*, is quicker than our humanity. But I determine nothing. Both theſe pleaſures are perfectly conſiſtent. And my idea of comedy requires only that the *pathos* be kept in ſubordination to the *manners*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

OF THE PROVINCE OF FARCE.

THUS much then for the general idea of COMEDY. If conſidered more accurately it is, further, of *two kinds*. And in conſidering theſe we ſhall come at a juſt notion of the province of FARCE. For this *mirror of private life* either, 1. reflects ſuch qualities and characters, as are common *to human nature at large*: or, 2. it repreſents the whims, extravagances, and caprices, which characterize the folly of *particular perſons or times*.

Again, *each* of theſe is, further, to be ſubdivided into *two ſpecies*. For 1. the repreſentations of *common nature* may either be taken *accurately*, ſo as to reflect *a faithful and exact image* of their original; which alone is *that* I would call COMEDY, as beſt agreeing to the deſcription which Cicero gives of it, when he terms it IMAGINEM VERITATIS. Or, they may be forced and overcharged above the ſimple and juſt proportions of *nature*; as when the

the exceſſes of a *few* are given for *ſtanding* characters, when not the man is deſcribed, but the *paſſion*, or when, in the draught of the man, the leading *feature* is extended beyond meaſure: And in theſe caſes the repreſentation holds of the lower province of FARCE. In like manner, 2. the other *ſpecies*, conſiſting in the repreſentation of *partial nature*, either tranſcribes ſuch characters as are peculiar to *certain countries or times*, of which *our comedy* is, in great meaſure, made up; or it preſents the image of *ſome real individual perſon*; which was the diſtinguiſhing character of the *old comedy* properly ſo called.

Both theſe kinds evidently belong to FARCE: not only as failing in that general and univerſal imitation of nature, which is alone deſerving the name of comedy, but, alſo, for this reaſon, that, being more directly written for the preſent purpoſe of diſcrediting certain *characters* or *perſons*, it is found convenient to exaggerate their peculiarities and enlarge their features; and

and ſo, on a double account, they are to be referred to that *claſs*.

And thus the *three forms of dramatic compoſition*, the only ones which good ſenſe acknowledges, are kept diſtinct: and the proper END and CHARACTER of each, clearly underſtood.

1. *Tragedy and Comedy*, by their lively but faithful repreſentations, cannot fail to *inſtruct*. Such natural exhibitions of the human character, being ſet before us in the clear mirror of the drama, muſt needs ſerve to the higheſt *moral uſes*, in awakening that inſtinctive approbation, which we cannot withhold from *virtue*, or in provoking the not leſs neceſſary deteſtation of *vice*. But this, though it be their beſt *uſe*, is by no means their primary *intention*. Their proper and immediate *end* is, to PLEASE: the *one*, more eſpecially by intereſting the *affections*; the *other*, by *a juſt and delicate imitation of real life*. *Farce*, on the contrary, profeſſes to *entertain*; but this, in order more effectually to

ſerve

ſerve the intereſts of virtue and good ſenſe. Its proper *end* and purpoſe (if we allow it to have any reaſonable one) is, then, to INSTRUCT. Which the reader will underſtand me as ſaying, not of what we know by the name of *farce* on the modern ſtage (whoſe *prime* intention can hardly be thought even that low one, aſcribed to it by Mr. Dryden, *of* entertaining *citizens, country gentlemen, and Covent-Garden fops)*, but of the legitimate *end* of this *drama*; known to the Antients under the name of the *old Comedy*, but having neither name nor exiſtence, properly ſpeaking, among the Moderns. Of which we may ſay, as Mr. Dryden did, but with leſs propriety, of Comedy, "*That it is a ſharp manner of* "inſtruction *for the vulgar, who are never* "*well amended, till they are more than ſuf-* "*ficiently expoſed.*" [Pref. to Tranſ. of Freſnoy, p. xix.]

2. Though tragedy and comedy reſpect the *ſame general* END, yet purſuing it by *different means*; hence it comes to paſs, their CHARACTERS are wholly different. For

For tragedy, aiming at *pleaſure* principally through the *affections*, whoſe flow muſt not be checked and interrupted by any counter impreſſions: and comedy, as we have ſeen, addreſſing itſelf *principally* to our *natural ſenſe of reſemblance and imitation*; it follows, that the *ridiculous* can never be aſſociated with tragedy, without deſtroying its *nature*, though with the *ſerious comic* it very well conſiſts.

And here the *practice* coincides with the *rule*. All exact writers, though they conſtantly mix *grave and pleaſant* ſcenes together in the ſame *comedy*, yet never preſume to do this in *tragedy*, and ſo keep the two ſpecies of *tragedy and comedy* themſelves perfectly diſtinct. But,

3. It is quite otherwiſe with *comedy* and *farce*. Theſe almoſt perpetually run into each other. And yet the reaſon of the thing demands as intire and perfect a ſeparation in this caſe, as in the other. For the perfection of *comedy* lying in the accuracy and fidelity of univerſal repreſentation, and *farce* profeſſedly neglecting or rather purpoſely

poſely tranſgreſſing the limits of common nature and juſt decorum, they claſh entirely with each other. And *comedy* muſt ſo far fail of giving the *pleaſure*, appropriate to its deſign, as it allies itſelf with *farce*; while *farce*, on the other hand, forfeits the *uſe*, it intends, of promoting popular ridicule, by reſtraining itſelf within the exact rules of *Nature* which Comedy obſerves.

But there is little occaſion to guard againſt this *latter* abuſe. The danger is all on the other ſide. And the paſſion for what is now called *Farce*, the ſhadow of the Old Comedy, has, in fact, poſſeſſed the modern poets to ſuch a degree, that we have ſcarcely one example of a comedy without this groſs mixture. If any are to be excepted from this cenſure in Moliere, they are his *Miſanthrope*, and *Tartuffe*; which are accordingly, by common allowance, the beſt of his large collection. In proportion as his other plays have leſs or more of this farcical turn, their true value hath been long ſince determined.

Of our own comedies, ſuch of them, I mean, as are worthy of criticiſm, Ben Jon-

ſon's *Alchemiſt* and *Volpone* bid the faireſt for being written in this genuine unmixed manner. Yet, though their merits are very great, ſevere Criticiſm might find ſomething to object even to theſe. The ALCHEMIST, ſome will think, is exaggerated throughout; and ſo, at beſt, belongs to that ſpecies of comedy which we have before called *particular and partial.* At leaſt, the extravagant purſuit, ſo ſtrongly expoſed in that play, hath now, of a long time, been forgotten; ſo that we find it difficult to enter fully into the humour of this highly-wrought character. And, in general, we may remark of ſuch characters, that they are a ſtrong temptation to the writer to exceed the bounds of truth in his draught of them at *firſt*, and are further liable to an imperfect, and even unfair, ſentence from the reader *afterwards.* For the welcome reception, which theſe pictures of prevailing *local* folly meet with on the ſtage, cannot but induce the poet, almoſt without deſign, to inflame the repreſentation: and the want of *archetypes*, in a little time, makes it paſs for immoderate,

derate, were it originally given with ever ſo much diſcretion and juſtice. So that, whether the *Alchemiſt* be farcical or not, it will *appear*, at leaſt, to have this note of Farce, "That the principal character is "exaggerated." But then this is all we muſt affirm. For, as to the *ſubject* of this Play's being a *local folly*, which ſeems to bring it directly under the denomination of Farce, it is but juſt to make a diſtinction. Had the *end and purpoſe* of the Play been to expoſe *Alchemy*, it had been liable to this objection. But this mode of *local folly* is employed as the *means* only of expoſing *another* folly, extenſive as our Nature, and coeval with it, namely *Avarice*. So that the ſubject has all the requiſites of true *Comedy*. It is juſt otherwiſe, we may obſerve, in the *Devil's an Aſs*; which therefore properly falls under our cenſure. For there, the folly of the time, *Projects and Monopolies*, are brought in to be expoſed as the *end and purpoſe* of the comedy.

On the whole, the *Alchemiſt* is a Comedy in juſt form, but a little *Farcical* in the extenſion of one of its characters.

The VOLPONE is a ſubject ſo manifeſtly fitted for the entertainment of all times, that it ſtands in need of no vindication. Yet neither, I am afraid, is this Comedy, in all reſpects, a complete model. There are even ſome Incidents of a farcical invention; particularly, the *Mountebank Scene*, and *Sir Politique's Tortoiſe*, are in the taſte of the *old comedy*; and without its rational purpoſe. Beſides, the *humour* of the dialogue is ſometimes on the point of becoming inordinate, as may be ſeen in the pleaſantry of *Corbaccio's miſtakes through deafneſs*, and in other inſtances. And we ſhall not wonder, that the beſt of his plays are liable to ſome objections of this ſort, if we attend to the *character* of the writer. For his nature was ſevere and rigid; and this, in giving a ſtrength and manlineſs, gave at times too an intemperance to his ſatyr. His taſte for ridicule was ſtrong, but indelicate; which made him not over-curious in the choice of his *topics*. And, laſtly, his *ſtyle* in picturing characters, though maſterly, was without that elegance of *hand* which is required to correct and allay the force

of

of ſo bold a colouring. Thus, the biaſs of his nature leading him to Plautus, rather than Terence, for his model, it is not to be wondered, that his wit is too frequently cauſtic, his raillery coarſe, and his humour exceſſive.

Some later writers for the ſtage have, no doubt, avoided theſe defects of the exacteſt of our old dramatiſts. But do they reach his excellencies? Poſterity, I am afraid, will judge otherwiſe, whatever may be now thought of ſome more faſhionable comedies. And, if they do not, neither the ſtate of general manners, nor the turn of the public taſte, appears to be ſuch as countenances the expectation of greater improvements. To thoſe, who are not over-ſanguine in their hopes, our forefathers will perhaps be thought to have furniſhed (what in nature ſeem linked together) the faireſt example of *dramatic*, as of *real manners*.

But here it will probably be ſaid, an affected zeal for the honour of our old poets has betrayed their unwary advocate into a conceſſion which diſcredits his whole pains

on this ſubject. For to what purpoſe, may it be aſked, this waſte of dramatic criticiſm, when, by the allowance of the idle ſpeculatiſt himſelf, his theory is likely to prove ſo unprofitable, at leaſt, if it be not ill-founded? The only part I can take in this nice conjuncture is, to ſcreen myſelf behind the authority of a much abler critical theoriſt, who had once the misfortune to find himſelf in theſe unlucky circumſtances, and has apologized for it. The *objection* is fairly urged by this fine writer; and, in ſo profound and ſpeculative an age as the preſent, I preſume to ſuggeſt no other anſwer than he has thought fit to give to it. "Speculations of this ſort, ſays he, do not "beſtow genius on thoſe who have it not; "they do not perhaps afford any great "aſſiſtance to thoſe who have; and moſt "commonly the men of genius are even "incapable of being aſſiſted by ſpeculation. "To what uſe then do they ſerve? why, "to lead up *to the firſt principles of beauty* "ſuch perſons as love reaſoning, and are "fond of reducing, under the controul of "philoſophy, ſubjects that appear the

"moſt

" moſt independent of it, and which are " generally thought abandoned to the ca- " price of taſte [p]."

[p] " Ces ſortes de ſpeculations ne donnent point " de genie à ceux qui en manquent; elles n'aident " beaucoup ceux qui en ont: et le plus ſouvent même " les gens de génie ſont incapables d'être aidées par " les ſpeculations. A quoi donc ſont-elles bonnes? " A faire remonter juſqu'aux premieres idées du beau " quelques gens qui aiment la raiſonnement, et ſe " plaiſent à reduire ſous l'empire de la philoſophie " les choſes qui en paroiſſent le plus indépendantes, " et que l'on croit communément abandonnées à la " bizarrerie des goûts." M. DE FONTENELLE.

The END *of the* SECOND VOLUME.

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